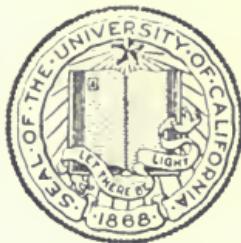


STORIES THAT END WELL

BY
OCTAVE
THANET



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STORIES THAT END WELL

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BY
OCTAVE THANET

AUTHOR OF
THE MAN OF THE HOUR, THE LION'S SHARE,
BY INHERITANCE, ETC.



NEW YORK
GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS

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CONTENTS

| CHAPTER | PAGE |
|--|------|
| I AN ADVENTURE IN ALTRURIA | I |
| II THROUGH THE TERRORS OF THE LAW | 28 |
| III THE REAL THING | 49 |
| IV THE OLD PARTISAN | 85 |
| V MAX—OR HIS PICTURE | 106 |
| VI THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS' BICYCLE | 140 |
| VII THE SPELLBINDER | 177 |
| VIII THE OBJECT OF THE FEDERATION | 209 |
| IX THE LITTLE LONELY GIRL | 239 |
| X THE HERO OF COMPANY G | 273 |
| XI A MIRACLE PLAY | 306 |

The stories in this book were originally printed in *Harper's Magazine*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *The Century Magazine*, *McClure's Magazine*, *Scribner's Magazine* and *The Woman's Home Companion*, and to these periodicals acknowledgements are due for their courtesy in giving permission for republication.

STORIES THAT END WELL

AN ADVENTURE IN ALTRURIA

THE story came to me through my friend, Mrs. Katherine Biff. Mrs. Biff is a widow. Her profession—I will not slight her beautiful art by a lesser word—is that of cook. She cooks for my cousin, Elinor, and it was during one of Elinor's absences in Europe that Mrs. Biff had her experience in Altruria, as the supply for Miss Mercedes Van Arden. It was highly interesting, I think.

She gave me the episode herself; because, in the first place, I am Elinor's own cousin (like the rest of the world, she loves Elinor) and in the second place, she knows that I appreciate her conversation. Assuredly I do value Katy's freehand sketches of life. She is a shrewd observer. Often while she talks I recall Stevenson's description of another: "She is not to be deceived nor think a mystery solved when it is repeated."

Katy is an American by birth, but Celtic by race

STORIES THAT END WELL

and by nature; a widow to whom children never were granted, but who out of her savings has helped educate and settle half a dozen of her nieces and nephews. Katy's married life was brief and not happy. The late Biff was a handsome man who never let other people's comforts or rights interfere with his own pleasure. Nevertheless, when he was killed in a saloon brawl she did not grudge him many carriages for his last journey (she who believes in simple funerals. "When I give free rides, I'll give 'em while I'm alive and can hear folks say 'Thank you!'" says she), and she has erected a neat stone to his memory.

It was three years after his death that Mrs. Biff came to Elinor, with whom she has lived since.

Elinor, one may say, bequeathed her to the Van Ardens. At least she suggested them importunately to Katy. To me she explained, "Katy is a maternal soul, and she can't help taking care of Mercy Van Arden, who is a stray angel in a wicked world and *thinks* she is a socialist."

We are conservative, peaceful, mid-Westerners in our town, and the only socialists belong to a class that we do not meet nor recognize save by their

AN ADVENTURE IN ALTRURIA

names in the papers published preliminary to fiery addresses delivered at not very reputable tavern halls. Therefore, to have a cultivated socialist, a young lady of wealth, who regarded her fortune as a "trust," come to live among us was exciting. Her aunt, from whom she had recently inherited her fortune, was well known to us, being a large property owner in the town. She, the late aunt, was not in the least a socialist; on the contrary, we esteemed her a particularly shrewd and merciless adept at a bargain. She had a will of her own; and considering that Miss Mercedes had borne the yoke for ten years, it was generally considered that she had earned her legacy.

Under all these conditions of interest, I admit I was glad enough to see Katy Biff's decent black hat approaching the side door the day after her entrance into the Van Arden family circle.

"Well, Miss Patsy," she began, "I guess you know she's queer; I thought I knew most of the brands of wine and women, as old Judge Howells used to say, but this one beats me! I came 'round to the yard—she's hired the Bateman place, furnished, you

STORIES THAT END WELL

know, while the Batemans are towering in Canada, she and her sister, who's a doctor lady. I hope the doctor'll be a kinder balance wheel, but she's got a chore!

"As I was saying, I came 'round the yard, aiming for the kitchen door, when I heard somebody calling, and there she was opening the front door to Nellie Small. Don't you remember Nellie Small? She was the Batemans' waitress for three months—poor young things—and smashed a lot of their nice wedding presents, the other girl told *me*. She's the kind that always looks so fine and never dusts the hind legs of the table. I wasn't none too pleased at the sight of her, but Miss Van Arden, she was awful polite; took us both right into the *parlor* and made us set down. I got worried thinking she'd mistook, and I hesitate a minute and then I says:

"'Miss Van Arden, I was going 'round to the kitchen door; I've come to see about the cook's place.'

"'I know,' says she right quick, with a little lift of her pretty brown head. 'I know,' says she, 'you're Mrs. Biff, and you,' says she, smiling so pretty on that Nellie trash, '*you're* Miss Small.'

AN ADVENTURE IN ALTRURIA

“ ‘I am,’ says Nellie, tossing her head.

“So then she begins; and from that beginning, and calling us in that way, you can imagine how she went on. She explained that while she was a poor girl at her aunty’s she read a lovely book about an imaginary country called Altruria; and that the gentleman who wrote it didn’t think we *could* do that way in this country; she supposed we couldn’t, but she was going to try, and she hoped we would like her and help her. She didn’t know much about housekeeping; she had helped her aunty, but it was writing letters and doing errands and dusting brac-a-brac (and she laughed); the only things she knew how to do right well was to dust and to polish jewelry and make tea. But she hoped to learn; and she had got all the machinery she could think of; there was an electric washer and an ironing machine, and a dishwashing machine, and bread and cake machines, and we ought not to need to work more than eight hours a day. She didn’t believe really in more than six hours a day, but at first maybe we wouldn’t mind eight.

“I could see that Nellie drinking it all in, getting more topping every minute.

STORIES THAT END WELL

"‘Miss Van Arden,’ says she, ‘how about evenings? I’m used to having *all* my evenings.’

“‘I ain’t, madam,’ says I, ‘not if there’s dinner company. And I know well enough Nellie ain’t, neither.’

“‘I—I could have dinner in the middle of the day,’ says Miss Van Arden real pitiful, ‘if it weren’t that my sister comes in tired at night and likes a hot meal; but I’ve got a fireless stove, and it *might* be cooked and left in the fireless stove and we could wait on ourselves.’

“‘I guess that’ll be satisfactory,’ says Nellie, dipping her head and smiling a haughty smile, while I was quivering to git a word in Miss Van Arden’s ear. But, of course, there was no chance. And Miss Van Arden, she went on to say that she didn’t eat meat herself, but her sister liked to have it, so—’

“‘I have to have meat myself,’ hops in that Nellie.

“‘Oh, of course,’ Miss Van Arden said; she didn’t dictate to others, but personally she didn’t eat meat; but she didn’t need any special vegetable dishes made for her.

“‘You shall have ’em if you want ’em, ma’am,’

AN ADVENTURE IN ALTRURIA

says I; then, ‘and I guess the cook will have something to say about the kitchen table; I ain’t never much on meat myself.’ I guess that was one for miss!

“‘Oh, thank you,’ says Miss Van Arden real grateful—she’s jest as sweet’s they make ’em, Miss Patsy. Then she looked very timidly at Nellie and the color came into her face.

“‘I should like to have you take your meals with me if—if I were alone,’ she stammers, ‘but my sister—we have so little time together—we’ll try not to make much waiting—’ She got into a kind of mess of stammers, when I cut in and told her that we much preferred to eat in our own pantry, which was big enough for a dining-room.

“Well, you can guess, Miss Patsy, that about this time I was wishing myself well out of it all, for I’ve lived with notional folks before, and folks who wanted to make friends of their help, and what I like with strangers is to have them keep their side of the fence and I’ll keep mine; I ain’t seeking any patronage from nobody, and I got too much self-respect not to be respectful. But I’d promised Mrs. Caines; so I simply told what wages I wanted, and

STORIES THAT END WELL

I made 'em reasonable, too. But Nellie—my! she named a sum two dollars a week more'n she ever'd got and four dollars more'n she was worth; and for hatred of meddling I sat still and let that poor little sweet Babe in the Woods agree to it. But I miss my guess if I have to put up with Nellie long!

"So we was engaged. Not a word about any day's work in the week or when she has sweeping done (she said she'd do the dusting herself—and she's *wise*, with Nellie 'round) or when she had bakings or anything; only that she'd have a laundress come in three days (eight hours a day) and do all our washing. We got a room apiece, but we haven't got a bathroom like at Mrs. Caines', so she told us we could have the guest bathroom. My! but I wish you'd heard her; and she's just the prettiest thing in the world and wears the prettiest clothes. Her clothes is all that gives me hope of her! She said she embroidered her shirt-waist herself; and I guess if she can sit up and take that amount of notice, she's got the makings of sense in her!

"She said could I come that day. I said, 'Yes, ma'am.'

AN ADVENTURE IN ALTRURIA

“ ‘You needn’t call me that,’ says she; ‘I don’t care for those little distinctions.’

“ ‘If you please, ma’am,’ I says, kind but firm, ‘they’re fitting and proper and I prefer it, ma’am.’

“Well, Miss Patsy, I got my first dinner yesterday. I even made the salad, which belongs to the waitress, but I couldn’t risk Nellie Small’s ideas of French dressing *yet!* Miss Patsy, she set her own plate at table.

“ ‘Now,’ says I, ‘let’s talk plain United States a minute. Whether that poor, innercent, looney lady craves our company or not, she ain’t going to git it. When I’m cooking a dinner I ain’t dressed up for company. I want *my* meals in peace, and you ought to want *yours*; they got their own gossip, same’s us; and whatever Miss Van Arden might be willing to do, the doctor’ll want to have her sister and her friends to herself without you and me butting in; just as I want my meals to myself without *them!*’

“Nellie told me she was just as good as them; and I said I wasn’t the one that had to decide that; goodness was something only the Lord Almighty got the scales for weighing exact, but I’d bet money,

STORIES THAT END WELL

if it came to sheer, imbecile cleanliness of heart and willingness to sacrifice herself for any old thing, that Miss Van Arden could give us both a long start and then beat us! But I guessed we'd leave that part out. Sich things was just business. We got to take the world's we found it. So she said *she* wouldn't take the plate off. I said I wasn't proud; wherefore I took it off myself, and she didn't put no more on, and the sisters had their meal in peace. She come when the buzzer called her and waited fairly well—she's bright enough when she wants to be.

"Doctor? Oh, she's a horse of another color. She's ten years older'n her sister and ain't seen much of her since their parents died and Miss Mercy went to live with her aunty, and she seems to set a good deal by her and be puzzled by her, too. She's got a good appetite and knows good food. I can git along with *her* all right. But I mistrust that Nellie, being so half baked, we'll get our trouble soon! We've a colored man looks out for the furnace and beats the rugs and tends to the yard and does chores; he seems a decent sort of man. I got a rise out of Nellie 'bout him, though. She was

AN ADVENTURE IN ALTRURIA

just *boiling* and *sissing* when I remarked, ‘You think everybody’s as good as everybody else, so I expect you won’t mind having Amos set down with us.’ Why, she flew into fifty pieces. ‘Eat with a nigger!’ she screamed.

“Of course, I was only fooling, and he was glad enough to get a good meal in the laundry; he’s a real nice, sensible man. But my lady was off, not so much as putting the dishes in the washing machine. Marched off with her young man, who’s on strike; so he’s underfoot most of the time. That kind makes me tired!”

Naturally, after this conversation with Katy I agreed with my sister that it would be interesting to call; and we planned an early day. It was, however, even earlier than our plans.

My chamber (at my sister’s house, where I was visiting) is on the side near the Bateman house; and it happened to be I who first discovered the smoke volleying out of the Bateman furnace chimney, followed by a roaring spout of flame. I knew Katy had gone to our little up-town grocery, for I had seen her on the way; and I made all haste across

STORIES THAT END WELL

the lawn, with all our ice-cream salt. The fire really was easily dealt with. By the time the firemen arrived (summoned by Nellie), all was over save the shouting, as they say in the political reports. Amos and Nellie were still calling "Fire!" Katy arrived a good second to the hose cart, breathless with running, but all her wits in good order.

"Long's you've put out the fire, Miss Patsey, I'll put out the fire department," said she; "they're the only danger. Miss Mercy, you open all the windows; let's git rid of the smoke. Nellie, what you carrying your clothes out for?"

Mercedes quite won our hearts by her docility and the quiet way she obeyed. Perhaps it was in recognition that Katy became her tower of refuge when the cause of the fire appeared. It was no less than Amos. He had been hired without any heartless prying into recommendations, on the ideal Altrurian ground of Need. He was asked, to be sure, could he run a furnace, and with the optimism of the African replied that he reckoned he could. He did not add that he had never tried to run one before. Doubtless it was natural that he should not discover the meaning of the cunning chains going

AN ADVENTURE IN ALTRURIA

through the floors; and when dampers increase the draft if shut and diminish it if open, who can wonder that Amos should artlessly shut everything in sight—including the registers? Natural laws did the rest.

Amos was very patient, almost tearful. He said he didn't know whatever Sally would do when he come home outen a job; Sally be'n so satisfied befo' but he didn't cast no blame on nobody. Sally, it came out later, was ill.

"Is it anything infectious?" demanded Mercedes' sister, the doctor, who by this time was on the scene.

"I dunno, ma'am; I reckon '*tis*,'" deprecated Amos. "Hit's a right new baby, come a week ago, an' she ain't got up yit."

Then it was while Nellie glibly proposed a new man, a man of assured efficiency, two years janitor of a "flat," and the brother of a friend; and Mercedes Van Arden had only bewildered compassion to justify her desire to forgive the culprit; and Doctor Van Arden frowned, that Katy spoke the word of power.

"Doctor," said she, "Amos mayn't know much

STORIES THAT END WELL

about the furnace, but he's a decent, honest man that found my ten cents out on the steps and gave it to me; and I know how to run furnaces, and I'll learn him. What's more, I can burn up *all* the coal, and not smoke up the house or the neighborhood. And one good thing—if Amos can't run a furnace, he *knows* it now, anyhow; there's many a janitor man's been smoking up flats for years ain't found out *that* yet. Doctor, I'll answer for Amos if you ladies will keep him."

Amos was kept. I fancied that Mercedes was almost as grateful as he.

After this for a time matters went on in a sufficiently prosaic and satisfactory manner. We put both of the sisters up in the Monday Club and the doctor consented to talk to the club on the "Smoke Nuisance" at our meeting in which we discussed that bane of the housekeeper, under the startling caption, "The City of Dreadful Night." We asked Mercedes to embody her own Social Creed in a fifteen-minute paper; but she pleaded almost with tears that she was simply a student who had not studied enough to know, only to feel; and she blushed deeply. So she was reprieved. Meanwhile

AN ADVENTURE IN ALTRURIA

the doctor (who had been quietly working up a practise in our town for six years) began to be seen at the bedsides of divers prominent ladies.

Several of us asked the sisters to luncheon, to dinner and to bridge parties. In return, the sisters entertained the club at tea, a function whereat Katy covered herself with glory, and Nellie graciously consented to pass plates and listen and break two heavy Colonial goblets—Nellie was slim and light on her feet, but she surely had a heavy hand.

Katy came over to borrow our monkey wrench the next morning because Nellie and the friend whom she had recommended to assist in waiting, had contrived to loosen a water faucet. She was brimming with criticisms of this last helper, as well as of Nellie.

“Did she stay to help wash dishes?” Thus she let her suppressed disgust explode. “Well, I should say! And got extra pay for staying, too, and had her young man in for supper afterward; and the things she gave him to carry away, the fancy candies with bow-knots on them, and the cakes with roses, and the *marionglasyes!* And when I spoke up to her she claimed Miss Mercy *told* her to—and

STORIES THAT END WELL

there's no saying, maybe she did! Her young man's on strike; he's at the locomotive works; she claims he gits four-fifty a day and he's striking for more, I expect; he's been on strike six weeks now, and he comes here to meals four times a week and eats—well, Miss Mercy said, 'Make him welcome,' so I do; but I own to you, Miss Patsy, something I feel real bad about. That young Mr. Gordon, it's his pa is president of the works; he's a real nice young man jest out of Harvard College, and he met Miss Mercy in Chicago and went 'round a lot with her, and I made up my mind and Nellie made up hers—and she ain't a fool, Nellie, for all she's so flighty—that they were going to make a match of it; but Nellie got Miss Mercy to promise she'd go speak to old Mr. Gordon about the strike; Miss Mercy's got a awful lot of stock herself, in the works; and I dunno the rights of it, but I'm sure those young things had *words!* It's a bitter black shame, too, it is, dragging that poor child in! Doctor don't like it any more than I do. And poor little Miss Mercy, she's scared to death; but *that* won't stop her; the more it hurts, the more she is sure she had ought to do it."

AN ADVENTURE IN ALTRURIA

I didn't think little Miss Van Arden could move old Mr. Gordon's convictions; but it was true that she was the largest individual stockholder in the works, and hence she might make trouble with the wavering minds, certainly trouble enough to irritate the president, who was a sterling, but not always a patient man.

"They want to run the works as a closed shop, don't they?" I asked.

"Jest that. Miss Mercy, if she *is* a reforming lady, she ain't arrergant like most sich; and she asked me what I thought about the strike. She got my opinion of it cold. 'There's strikes and strikes,' says I. 'Strikes for higher wages may be right or wrong, as depends, but a strike for the right to keep every other man but your gang out of a job is bound to be wrong. I ain't no sympathy with any kind of closed shops, whether the bosses close 'em to union men, or the union men close 'em to everybody 'cept themselves.' "

The next day I saw the little Socialist's white, miserable face go by my window with Katy's solid cheer at her elbow. She had agreed to see Mr. Gordon first before she appeared at the board meet-

STORIES THAT END WELL

ting, and (as Katy put it) "poured coal oil on the fire to put it out." Of course, there was a useless journey. Mr. Gordon felt moved to utter certain pet opinions of his own regarding the ease of making mischief when ignorant people interfered in business. If it was any comfort to her to know that she was giving him an infernal lot of trouble she could take it all right; but he had to do right according to his own conscience, and not hers, and he wished her good-morning. Very limp and dejected she departed.

"'The worst of it is,' she says to me, Katy related, 'the worst of all is, while I believe he ought to do what the men want rather than keep up the strike, I don't really feel *sure* they ought to want him to do it. It's so hard on the outside men.' Oh, she's got some sense straying about her, though it's mainly lost to view. But I do wish she could make it up with her beau. He ain't been 'round for a week; and when folks ain't got a meat diet they can't stand the strain of being crossed in love!"

Even Katy's Celtic loyalty was staggered the next week. She came over on a perfectly needless borrowing errand to tell me.

AN ADVENTURE IN ALTRURIA

"Did you see it, ma'am? Being my afternoon out, I wasn't there. Did *you* see that woman tumble down on our grass and herself run out with Amos and Mrs. Kane?" (Mrs. Kane was the laundress, who acted also as scrubwoman once a week, Nellie's health not being equal to the weekly cleaning required in a tidy household.) "Did you see it? I began to sniff the minute I struck the hall. My word! I knowed it. Then I begun to hear the groans—'*O-o-ah!* *O-o-ah!*' mumbling, grumbling kind of groans—I didn't need anything more to get next to that situation, no, ma'am. Mrs. Kane come tumbling down-stairs. You know her, Miss Patsy, Tim Kane's widow, a fair-to-middling laundress and next door to a fool about everything else. Jest the kind that gits a good husband like Timothy and then fools away the money he leaves her and has to come on the wash tub. Down-stairs she comes—wild! The poor woman, they'd seen her fall outside, and Miss Mercy and she'd taken her in on a mattress with Amos to help; Amos wanted to call the amberlance, but Miss Mercy said no, they'd take her to the police; so they three took the poor creature into the house. And 'Oh, hear her groan!' I said,

STORIES THAT END WELL

yes, she was easy to hear. I guess Amos felt all right; but you know niggers are biddable, and whatever they think, the creatures do like they're told.

"Well, I walked up-stairs. She was there in the guest chamber on one of the twin beds with the flowery card, 'Sleep gently in this quiet room,' etcetera, over the towsledest head and *sech* skirts! She'd been having a time for sure. Herself had put a wet ice bandage on the woman's head and a hot-water bag to her feet, and she was a-laying her hands, her own pretty, soft, little, white, trembling hands, to her awful shoes, but says I:

"'You *stop!* Don't you tech her!'

"'I must,' says she; 'they're soaked.'

"'Don't you see what's the matter of her?' say I.
'She's dead drunk!'

"I reckoned she'd deny it. Not a bit. 'I suppose so,' says she; 'that's why I wouldn't let them call the amberlance.'

"'And do you mean to keep her *here?*' says I.
'That drunken rubbish?'

"Well, she does; she was awful sorry for the trouble to us, but the woman fell down at her door, and she was in dire misery, and Miss Mercy she felt

AN ADVENTURE IN ALTRURIA

she had *got* to take her in. My word, Miss Patsy, I had to shet my teeth a minute to keep back my feelings, but every word I said was: ‘I guess you better move that other bed out and then you can *burn* this one!’ Heavens, I ain’t going to describe the next hour till the doctor come. Now, she’s laying comfortable in the doctor’s gown, in that nice clean bed, and I’ve made her chicken broth and mustard plasters and everything else for her comfort.

“When the doctor come, she said, ‘This goes the limit,’ and then she bit off the rest and swallered it and said, ‘We’ll have to scrub her.’ And we did—with washing powder and scouring soap. I hope it hurt, but I’m ’fraid it didn’t.”

“How does Nellie take it?”

The sorely tried Mrs. Biff grinned. “ ’Tis that keeps me from quite sinking; she is most dretful horrified and vowing she’s going to leave.”

However, Nellie did not go; it was the castaway whom they had succored who awoke in her right mind before any one was stirring the next morning, clothed herself, for lack of her own rags (which were airing in the back yard), in a decent brown

STORIES THAT END WELL

dress, cloak and hat of the doctor's from the guest-room closet, put on the doctor's large, serviceable boots, and gathering the loose silver and three one-dollar banknotes left in Katy's cash box, otherwise her "cup" from the pantry shelf, departed into the unknown nether world from whence she came.

"And a mercy she didn't murder us in our beds!" opined Nellie; "maybe she will yet!"

Nellie's prophecy appeared less grotesque the following week when her young man, Phil, by Christian name—I did not come to know his surname—discovered at the police station or the engine house (he frequenting both places in his wealth of leisure) that the castaway had escaped from a quarantined house full of smallpox, in a little hamlet near by. Here was a situation! Nellie vowed she wouldn't sleep a wink were she Mrs. Kane or Amos, particularly Amos, because colored folk took naturally to smallpox.

Amos only grinned; but Mrs. Kane was palpably nervous and began inquiring into symptoms of what Nellie termed "the dread disease."

Presently she was feeling them faithfully. And Katy shrugged the shoulder of scorn. But scorn

AN ADVENTURE IN ALTRURIA

turned into consternation by Monday, for an agitated neighbor came to the front door to announce that Mrs. Kane was sick in bed with an awful fever and broke out terrible, and would the doctor please step over there.

"And all the clothes in the suds!" sighed Katy. "But that's nothing. Poor Miss Mercy! she's almost out of her mind; she says that *she's* to blame; she's brought smallpox on that innocent woman, and most like she'll die; and if she hadn't been so wicked and headstrong and had listened to her friend (she didn't name nobody, but I know she means young Gordon) and her sister, it wouldn't have happened; she hadn't even helped the woman who fetched the smallpox; she'd only tempted her to crime! And what should she say to poor Mrs. Bateman? Nobody wanted to rent her home to be a pest-house. And she'd set the house afire by hiring an ignorant man— Oh, she was a wicked girl! Her aunty often told her she was a fool, and oh, why hadn't she believed her and not tried to do things too big for her senseless head? And she's been fairly crying her eyes out. The poor, sweet, humble-minded little thing!"

STORIES THAT END WELL

Poor little Mercy! But I was to pity her much more during the succeeding ten minutes. Amos came out to the barberry hedge to tell our cook that Miss Mercy was in bed and he 'lowed she'd small-pox. He was off in pursuit of the doctor, who was at Mrs. Kane's who'd got a fearful bad case. Hardly was Amos out of sight than Nellie, in her cheap imitation of the latest fashion of big hat, dashed out of the gate after the street car. So do rats desert the sinking ship, I thought. Straightway I went over to the house. Katy herself answered the bell. She was in two minds about ejecting me by force, but she softened when I recalled to her how recently I had been vaccinated.

"Well, Miss Patsy, that's *so*," she admitted, "and besides, I ain't absolutely sure '*tis* smallpox. But she'd a kinder chill and I wouldn't let her come down-stairs. Say, you don't happen to have seen Nellie anywhere?"

When I told her, she drew a long sigh. We were standing at the side door, where a great Norway fir shakes its blue-green shadows.

"'Tis like her," said Katy bitterly, "and only yesterday Miss Mercy gave her sech a pretty waist. And

AN ADVENTURE IN ALTRURIA

now she's run off and Miss Mercy's got the small-pox—mebbe. Well, I dunno as it's as dangerous as Alterruria, and mebbe one will cure the other—Oh, say! Look, Miss Patsy!"

I looked. They came in a kind of rush with the flutter of brilliant autumn leaves, swirling around the house corner—Nellie and young Ralph Gordon. Nellie's cheeks were blazing, but young Gordon looked white and stern.

"Why, Nellie Small, ain't you run away?" cried Katy.

Before Nellie could retort, the young gentleman took the limelight.

"Where is Miss Mercy?" he demanded in that tone of voice which the novelists call "tense;" "I must say a few words to her. You can let me say them through the door, if you wish, Mrs. Biff."

Katy hardly considered; her eyes shone into his masterful face. She turned on her heel and he followed her. Instantly Nellie's excitement found burning words: "*I heard* her, Miss McFarlin! She thinks I ran away! *Me!* Well, I know she has a mean opinion of me, but I didn't expect she'd be that unjust. I'm jest as fond of Miss Mercy as she is;

STORIES THAT END WELL

I only sprinted down the street to ketch her young man, because I know they had a misunderstanding, and I was sure, no matter how mad he was, the minute I told him, he'd come a-running, and whether they let her see him or not, it would cheer her up a whole lot to know he tried. And as for Mrs. Biff's pitying Miss Mercy and finding fault with her, *I* can tell you she's made me believe things Mrs. Biff nor nobody else could if she offered me the kingdom of heaven and a chromo! I never believed before rich folks *could* be like her. I don't know what that Altrury of hers is, but if *she* believes in it *I'm* going to; and so is Phil, and he's going to make them stop the strike, too; and it's a whole lot because of what she's said and what I've said 'bout her. It is, for fair!"

Thereupon Nellie burst into tears, and disappeared behind the kitchen lattice.

Later, some hours later, I had a chance to tell Katy. But it was then no news to her. She shook her philosophic head. "'Lightning and grace,' Biff used to say, 'you can't noways bet on, for there's no manner of knowing *where* they'll strike.' Now that Nellie, she fairly bu'st into Miss Mercy's room,

AN ADVENTURE IN ALTRURIA

me being busy seeing Mr. Gordon safe outer the house; and I expected to find she'd riz Miss Mercy's temperature; but she'd most cured her instid; and Miss Mercy she set up and laffed out loud. And she ain't got smallpox, neither, not a bit; no more'n that ijit Sallie Kane, who's down with German measles and nothing wuss. I guess we was all more scared than hurt. But it beats all about Nellie—well, I want to be fair to all, she's been doing the sweeping better for a good while. All I say is, if Alterruria can convert Nellie Small there must be something decent in Alterruria."

"I wish it might convert all of us—a *little*," said I. "I'm afraid I'm not enlightened enough to desire entire conversion; it would demand a new incarnation!"

THROUGH THE TERRORS OF THE LAW

A STORY OF ARKANSAS

SISTER ESMERALDA HUMPHREYS was not present at the meeting of Zion Hard-shell Baptist Church. It is questionable whether there had been any such meeting had she been likely to attend, since how to dispense with the ministry of Sister Humphreys was its object, and the sister was a woman of power. But she had gone to the store for her semi-annual settlement of account. Therefore the disaffected in Zion raised their heads, perceiving that their hour was come.

The "church-house" (of a week-day the school-house) crowned a gentle rise of ground on the outskirts of an Arkansas plantation. It was backed by the great gum forests, where the sun rose, while on one side, winding toward the reddening evening skies, the cypress slash had eaten its way through the brown clay to the Black River. Full of mystery

THROUGH THE TERRORS OF THE LAW

and uncanny beauty was the slash, its sluggish gleam of water creeping darkly under solemn cypresses and monstrous hackberry-trees, tinselized with cow-lilies in summer, spattered with blood-red berries in winter, green with delicate beauty when the cypress is in leaf, or gray and softly brown when its short-lived foliage falls. Did one care to deal in mystical analogy, one might find in the slash suggestions of the African's undeveloped soul, where brute and child still battle for mastery.

It was a school-house for children of the darker race only, and only negroes were in the little band whose hymns penetrated the wide sweep of cotton-fields, the weird African cadences wilder and more mournful than the hoot-owl's oboe keening in the forest. To-night the house was but sparsely filled by the regular worshipers, Zion congregation proper. Brother Zubael Morrow presided, because he had once attended a district Republican convention, where he had imbibed parliamentary lore.

"Dis meetin' will please come to ordah," he announced; "is you-all ready fo' de question?"

"W' are question, Bruddah Morrow?" called out a brother in the rear seats.

STORIES THAT END WELL

"Bruddah Carroll, you is out of ordah. Whenst I git in dis cheer an take dis gabble,"—he extended the hatchet used, before its promotion, to chop kindling,—“take notice, I is de *Cheer*; you-all is to ‘dress me as ‘Mist’ Cheerman.’ You is axin’ ‘bout de question: de question is, Shall Sist’ Esmereldy Humphreys continner to usu’p de rights of we-all’s pastor? Ain’t dat the understandin’ of dis here awjence?”

Signs of approval and assent came from the audience. The chairman, rising, took the attitude of the white speaker whom he had admired most at the convention, plunging one hand into the bosom of his coat—buttoned for that purpose—and gazing solemnly about him. All the colored population of the country-side were proud of the school-house, which was painted a neat lead color as to wood-work and brown as to walls; with red lettering done by a member who had followed the painter’s trade (although not very far), declaring piously on the west wall, “The Lord will provide,” and politely requesting on the east wall, “Please do not spit on the floor.” A stately blackboard behind the teacher’s desk showed her excellent moral sentiments and pen-

THROUGH THE TERRORS OF THE LAW

manship. There was no carpet on the floor, but it was clean and the windows glistened.

"Dis yere school-house, dis yere chu'ch-house, are a credit to de cullud ladies an' gen'l'men of Zion Baptis' Chu'ch," declaimed Brother Morrow, sonorously, "an' we-all had orter have a pastor who w'u'd —we'd correspond. I ain't sayin' one word of disparagement of our late deceased pastor. He be'n a good, pious man" ("Amen!" from two half-grown lads in the rear), "but he had a terrible sight of losses an' troubles, losin' all of his chillen like he done; an' him sick such a spell befo' de Lawd called him f'om grace to glory. Mabbe he didn't be'n eloquent like the supply we had, but Elder W'ite had nare right to git Sist' Lucy Tompkins to run 'way wid 'im, f'om 'er good, kin', respectable husban'" (a little crumpled, elderly negro raised his head with an air of modest pride), "an' he done borry two dollars an' fifty cents of de cheer dat I don't expec' nothin' of ontwel de jedgment day! So w'en our pastor passed away we'all was like sheep outen a shepherd; an' we'en Sist' Humphreys done offah to keep de chu'ch-house clean an' cyah on de services of Zion, an' make no cha'ges, we-all acceptid."

STORIES THAT END WELL

"Mist' Cheerman,"—a grizzled negro in decent black held up a finger,—"Mist' Cheerman, was hit Sist' Humphreys keep dis 'ouse dis away?"

"Yes, Bruddah Moore; she are a right good scrubber," admitted the chairman, while the congregation stared at the speaker, the richest colored man in the county, who had moved into the neighborhood recently, this being his first appearance in Zion.

"Fo' a spell," continued the chairman, "t'ings went on suspiciously enough. Sist' Humphreys be'n an edicated lady; an' she is a plumb good cook. Her preachin' didn't be'n whut we-all air longin' to heah; nare shakin' of de soul ovah de mouf of hell, nare mo'nin', nare revivals; but we hilt our peace, an' Zion attendid regular, an' las' socherable gatherin' there be'n nigh a hundred, big an' little, presint—"

"And she gave us all cake and candy and lemonade with ice in it!" a woman's mellow voice called out.

The heads of the congregation went round in the direction of the voice, and a large number of rolling black eyes stared at the school-teacher, whose comely brown face showed that deepening of tint which is the same as an Anglo-Saxon's blush. "Teacher" had

THROUGH THE TERRORS OF THE LAW

been educated at Tuskegee and was suspected of being "biggity."

The chairman gave her a gloomy nod. "No doubt, my sistah, no doubt hankerin' ayfter de flesh-pots of Egypt done fotch *some* po' sinnahs t' de altar. I ain't complainin' of de carnil an' carniferous food she done give us, but of de spitichul nu'ishment. I nev' did see a mo'ner rollin' on dis flo' w'ilst Sist Humphreys be'n yere. We-all be'n thirstin' an' famishin' fo' a good ol'-time revival. But we enjured ontwel one day de glory come on Br'er Pope, an' he hollered,—tryin' to lif' us all up,—'Amen! Amen! Let de sinner quit sinnin' an' he *shill* be saved!' An' dat ar woman she call out: 'Yes; let 'im quit sinnin'! Let 'im quit sellin' of aigs to de sto' w'en he don't be keepin' only one hen!' Dat ar remark incinerated false an' wicked notions 'bout Unc' Alick Pope, who lives nigh de cunnel's chicken-yard." (A solitary giggle from the shoolmistress.) "She done fa'ly r'ar an' charge 'bout chicken-stealin'. Dat ain't promote edderfication nor good feelin'." (Groans of assent from a deeply interested audience.) "But nex' Sabbath come wuss. She done announce she be'n 'lowin' to preach us a serious dis-

STORIES THAT END WELL

course on de Ten Commandmints. Well, we-all done look dem commandmints up an' study on dem a heap. We felt tol'able secure on de Fust an' Second, she lumpin' dem togedder fo' one out at preachin'; an' we sat back easy, hopin' fo' grace an' true religion; but she jes' slued roun' on to conjure-cha'ms an' such, invagin' ag'in' dem twell we got all de devotional feelin' plumb squoze outen us. Third Commandmint we natchelly didn't expec' no harm of; but ayfter de fust godly words 'bout profane sw'arin', ef she didn't git on to false sw'arin' befo' the gran' jury, 'bout crap-shootin', en git us all terrible oncomfortable. Nex' command she didn't be'n sound on, sayin' a heap 'bout washin' up in tubs Sattiddy nights, an' tew little 'bout de spitichul ovservation of the holy day; an' come down hard on a respectid brother who sayd once, 'I isn't to wash in winter'; an' sayd bad wuds 'bout sisters dat went visitin' Sattiddy evenin's, stidder washin' up ready fo' de holy day; sayd some sisters nev' did wash de po' little tricks' shirts, jes' taken a new flour-sack an' cut holes in it. She talked like dat ontwel it be'n right ondecent and onchristian; an' one sister dat's subjec' to fits providenchelly done t'rowed one an'

THROUGH THE TERRORS OF THE LAW

bruk up de meetin'. But we-all sorter done spunk up on de Fif' Commandmint; looked lak *hit* be'n sho' harmliss; an' we done fotch de chillen to learn deir juty to deir parents. Well, dey sho' *got* it! But den she done scorched de parents mightily 'bout de 'zample dey be'n bleeged to set de chillen. Dat ar be'n a fearful, sufferin' hour, an' I nev' did see dis yere congregation so dry an' havin' to git out de pump so often. Dey went by whole famblies; an' befo' she be'n frow mighty nigh ever' las' chil' b'en taken outside. We didn't *dast* let 'em see frow it." (Groans all over the house.) "She nigh bust de chu'ch on de Sixth Commandmint wid outrageous rema'ks on *razors*. An' nex' Sunday comes de Seventh Commandmint, an' we ain't nowise willin' to enjure her handlin' of *dat*, nohow." (Deep groans of assent from brothers and sisters alike.) "Nor de Eight', neider." ("No, *no!*" from the seat of Uncle Alexander Pope.) "Wust is, de ongodly outside, de Methodists an' de cullud folks from de Ridge, is fixin' to come over an' see we-all ripped up. De chu'ch house be'n plumb full ever' Sabbath, an' we-all don' dast stay 'way, not knowin' what scandillous stories will be circulated." ("Dat's so!" "Holp, Lord!"

STORIES THAT END WELL

from earnest souls in the audience.) "An' de chu'ch is losin' of members. Bruddah Dan Williams done moved away." ("No, sah, no, he ain't; he b'en sent to de pen!") "I didn't say how come he moved, Brudder Carroll; he are *gone*. Unc' Jim Hollis done 'bandon his crop. Aunt Caledonia Ray lef' las' week 'count of injur'us reflections 'bout a mince pie she done mix up by mistake wid de week's wash she taken fum de big house. We done pled wid Sist' Humphreys to quit; but she won't quit. Now de question am: How shill we git saved f'om Sist' Humphreys an' git a preacher will preach religion—*an' muffin else?*"

Amid a deep hum of applause Brother Morrow sat down. Half a dozen voices begged for attention; but the chair recognized Sister Susannah Belle Coffin. Sister Susannah was of exceeding comeliness and a light-brown complexion. If report spake truly, there was no one in Zion who had more reason to dread a fearless and minute exposition of the demands of the Seventh Commandment. She had started her career as a destroyer of domestic peace with a capital of good looks, a gift for cookery, a voice of silver, and two small unpremeditated children. "A single

THROUGH THE TERRORS OF THE LAW

pussen like me wid two chillen," would be her plaintive excuse for demanding the good offices of the brothers in cutting wood or "palin' in her gyardin"; and too often, under the spell of Susannah's eyes and Susannah's voice and Susannah's cooking, the end of an innocent neighborly kindness was a jealous wife and a "parting." Sometimes Susannah wedded the departing husband, sometimes she flouted him; but steadily, single or wedded, Susannah's little garden-plot grew more beautiful, Susannah's kitchen range accumulated a more dazzling array of tin and copper, and Susannah's best room was more splendidly bedecked with curtains, pillow-shams, and a gilt mirror.

At present speaking, the dark enchantress was the lawful wedded wife of the young blacksmith, and the whole plantation had admired to see her enter the holy estate in white Swiss muslin and a voluminous veil which she utilized, later, as a window-curtain. She now inquired with much pleasing modesty of mien: "I jes want to ask, Mist' Cheerman, how're we-all to git Sist' Humphreys to go if she don' wanter?"

Sighs, allied to groans, bore testimony that she had

STORIES THAT END WELL

voiced the forebodings of the audience. But a visiting brother who had the courage of his non-residence, came to the front; he suggested that a letter be sent to the sister, announcing the sense of the meeting, saying that the congregation was not edified by her ministrations and that the church-house would be closed until a new pastor had been selected.

"De motion, as de cheer un'erstands it, are to dismiss Sist' Esmeraldy Humphreys an' shet de do's on her," said the chairman. "Is—what is it, Sist' Macklin?"

He spoke kindly, and the woman whom he addressed seemed in need of kindness, since she was trembling visibly. She was a little creature in the pathetic compromise for mourning which poverty makes with grief—her accustomed winter jacket of brown, but with a somber garnishment of crape, black ribbons on her old gray hat, and a black border to her handkerchief.

The congregation looked at her, pityingly, as she began in the high-pitched voice of the unaccustomed speaker:

"Bruddah Morrow—I mean Bruddah Cheerman, I are right mortified Sist' Humphreys done chastice

THROUGH THE TERRORS OF THE LAW

you all; but I jest got to b'ar my testimony you-all are mistaken 'bout her bein' crool. Oh, dear brudahs an' sistahs, she ain't! You-all knows my—my boy”—she choked over the word, and the hearers waited in mute and awkward compassion, because her boy, the last of her children, had been hanged at the little county-seat only a month before for the murder of his wife—“my boy w'u'dn't repent; he w'u'dn't do nuffin but cuss de woman dat fotch him dar an' den nebber so much look at him. I spen' ever' las' cent I had on earth to try git him off, an' I taken de jail wash, I did, to be nigh 'im an' mabbe git him a bite like he's uster to eat; but he w'u'dn't paht lips wid me; sayd I be'n a good mudder to him, but he didn't want to h'ar me beggin' an' pleadin' wid 'im to repent an' make peace wid God. Oh, I did be'n in de brack water, wadin' *deep!* Look laak I c'u'dn't enjure hit nohow. I reckon I does nebber be able to see so well 'cause I cry so stiddy dem days. An' all de cry of my po' ol' hairt be'n, ‘O Lawd, I don' no mo' ax you to save his life, but, O Lawd, *don'* let 'im die cussin’! Fotch 'im 'ome! I kin b'ar hit to have 'im go, if he sho' goes whar he kin be good an' be happy an' be safe; fo' I does

STORIES THAT END WELL

know dat boy nev' did aim to be mean.' An' w'en my haint be'n broke wid longin' an' mis'ry, Sist' Humphreys she come. She done holp me all fru; an' now she went to my boy; he *hatter* see her. I don' know w'at she say; but she come back to me an' say, 'Praise God, dat po' sinnah hab foun' peace an' joy—an' he want his mudder!' An' I did come. An' he putt his po' haid on my knees jes lak w'en he be'n a li'l boy an' uster laff 'bout de big kin'lin'-pile he allers keep fo' his mammy. An' Sist' Humphreys, some way she git dem jailer-men be so kin' an' tender to 'im, lak I cayn't noways tell. An' he did die happy. De Lawd sustain him, an' he sustain me. Blessed be de name of de Lawd, an' blessed be dat 'oman dat is his ministah!"

She sank down in her seat and wept quietly, while the impressionable African temperament sent forth pious ejaculations: "Holp, Lawd!" "Fotch comfort!" "Bless de mo'nahs!" The schoolmistress was in tears, and the stalwart young man near her openly wiped his eyes. Brother Moore bent his brows; even Brother Morrow winked hard: but Sister Susan-nah's emotion was most in evidence; she was sobbing violently into a pink-embroidered handkerchief.

THROUGH THE TERRORS OF THE LAW

Presently she rose to her feet. Now Susannah was the woman who had lured the wretched murderer through a brutal passion to a brutal crime, and the eyes of the congregation were focused upon her.

"Bruddahs, sistahs," said Susannah, in her wonderful voice, with its chords of plaintive music, which made her hearers grin out of sheer emotion, "I nev' did aim to do dat po' young man hurt; but he sayd t'ings to me, t'ings"—she sighed and hung her head—"he hadn't orter have sayd, him bein' a married man; an' I be'n right mad at him, an' I own up I done him right onchristian an' onmussiful, for I didn't show no sympathy or even go see 'm hanged. Now, I do repent. But it ain't nare preachin' of Sist' Humphreys done give me a brokin an' a contrary hairt. Her scorchin' don' make me mo'n. Hit cakes up my hairt. She nev' did have one single revival. Rev. Bulkely of de Ridge he does have a mighty big one ever' spring; you kin hear de screeches 'mos' a mile! He tol' me hisse'f he w'u'd be willin' to minister a spell to dis sorely tried flock, an', mo' ovah, he tol' me dat we-all *c'u'dn't* have Sist' Humphreys nor no woman preach to us; for it be'n

STORIES THAT END WELL

ag'in' de rule of de Baptis' Chu'ch. Hit be'n forbid.
We cayn't be Baptis' an' keep Sist' Humphreys."

With meek grace Susannah resumed her seat and the sheltering support of the blacksmith's arm. She had won. Now that a way of escape was opened,—a way, moreover, ending in a dazzling vista of a "big revival,"—no sympathy for the Widow Macklin could induce Zion to face the fiery chariots of the Seventh Commandment driven by Sister Humphreys.

In spite of the schoolmistress' eloquence and the stumbling speech of two boys who tried to tell that Sister Humphreys had done a heap for them, when the vote was put, only six of the forty-eight persons present voted to retain the preacher. Brother Moore declined to vote.

Susannah watched the downcast faces of Sister Humphreys' supporters through her half-shut eyes. and smiled her languid, mysterious smile.

But of a sudden one of the two striplings who had spoken for Sister Humphreys left his place by the window and ran to the door.

With instant premonition of peril, the flock of Zion turned on the benches. A deep intake of breath signified their dismay as there entered a tall brown

THROUGH THE TERRORS OF THE LAW

woman in widow's weeds. She cast a calm, full eye over the faces under the lamplights—faces already stricken awry with fear; for, notwithstanding their numbers and apparent strength of position, dread of the pastor insisted, as light insists through closed eyelids.

Sister Humphreys walked with no pause to the platform. Brother Morrow was so short a man and she was so tall a woman that her handsome head towered above his. She was a brown negro, but her lighter color and her regular features and thinner, more sensitive lips were due to no admixture of white blood; they came from a dash of the yellow races mixed long before her time in the Old World, where her ancestors were barbaric princes. She stood with the incomparable grace that is given sometimes to the bearer of burdens, tall, erect, shapely. She spoke in a mellow rich voice not raised a note above its speaking tone.

"Is this heah a meetin'?" gently interrogated Sister Humphreys of Brother Morrow, "or have you-all done aju'ned?"

"We done aju'ned, sistah," Brother Morrow replied quickly, flinching from a possible trap.

STORIES THAT END WELL

"In that case," Sister Humphreys argued at once, "will you kindly take you' seat an' let me speak fo' de las' time to Zion Baptis' Chu'ch?"

It was impossible to refuse a hearing. Brother Morrow shuffled into a lower seat.

"My people,"—a vague, incomprehensible thrill of apprehension and magnetic fascination stirred the attentive faces, all save the widow Macklin's; hers was bent on her own withered, toil-crooked hands while she prayed,—“I want to say, first, that I nev' did aim to keep *on* hu'tin' you' feelin's. But I am 'bleeged to save you' souls. You-all know how my po' husban' toiled an' prayed. Thar's ol' people who loved him an' followed his teachin's, but they went to their reward, an' he was lef' with a generation of young niggers who feared neither God nor man nor the grand jury—lying, stealing, with no more morals than pigs an' no great cleaner. It broken my po' ol' man's heart, so he hadn't no strength to stand the breast complaint, so he died. The last night I heard him praying for you, an' I come to him. When he looked up at me I knowed I couldn't hold him; I knowed he ain't never again goin' look up at me with the light in his eyes an' the love in his smile like he

THROUGH THE TERRORS OF THE LAW

looked then. An' I sayd to him, 'Silas, honey, don' you worry 'bout that there wuthless flock of yours. *I'll* save 'em. I know the way. I sho' do!' An' he believed me; because of his believing me his end was peace. So you see, my people, I am 'bleeged to save you. I tol' him I know the way; I do know it. You' pastor, who is a saint in heaven, done used always the ways of gentleness. He preached the love of God, an' you swallered it down, smiling and happy; an' it ain't done you-all no mo' good than stick candy does do a person that done taken poison an' needs wahm water an' mustard. What you-all needed didn't be'n loving kindness, but the terrors of the law, an' not *strained*, neider. An' if it takes the las' day of my pilgrimage, you'll git 'em till you *begin* to repent an' show works *meet* for repentence. But when you *begin* to repent, the word of mercy will come. 'Cause when the prodigal son be'n a *long way off*, his father come a-runnin' to him. Now, hark to me: I went this evening to the cunnel. He explained to me about the Baptis' *dis-cip-line*." (A ripple of excitement in the audience.) "In consequence, this chu'ch will hereayfter be the *Methodis'* Zion Chu'ch. That is why I am speaking fo' the las' time to Zion

STORIES THAT END WELL

Baptis' Chu'ch. Ayfter to-night there won't be no Zion Baptis' Chu'ch. There ain't no great difference in doctrine, an' the dis-*cip*-line is more convenient. Any brother or sister desiring it, an' not in danger of catching col', can be immersed. The cunnel an' I done talked this over; an' he done rented this chu'ch-house to *me*. If the congregation ain't satisfied, they got to take to the woods. I also got one word mo' to say: it is that the work of grace in this community is a right smart hampered by the evil doings of Sister Susannah Coffin."

Susannah and her husband were both on their feet, both ready to speak; but something in the attitude of the figure on the platform to which the long lines of the mourning-veil gave a strange suggestion of sibylline dignity, held speech away from them. Solemnly and not with any anger, Sister Humphreys' eyes searched the eyes of the man and woman before her, while the spectators held their breath. "Wherefo' it is bettah ever' way," she said slowly, "that both her an' her husband go out from us fo'-evermo'. Bruddah Coffin, the cunnel has got another blacksmith, an' you ain't got no mo' reason fo' stayin' on longer. And as fo' you, *Sister*—"

THROUGH THE TERRORS OF THE LAW

"I won't go!" shrilled Susannah, hysterically weeping; it was with no pretense now. "You cayn't fo'ce me!"

"You *will* go, *Sister*, fo' you don' wanter lose the young man you got now. You will go; an' you will take him along of you; an' you will go *so far* he cayn't heah no word of my sermons. Go in peace."

Susannah faced about, writhing between fear and rage. "You cowards! you ornery, pusillanimous cowards!" she flung back at the gaping black faces. "You putt on dog when she ain't heah, but minute she lif's her han', you cayn't make a riffle! Ba-h-h! S-sh!" she hissed at them like a cat or a snake. "Come on, you fool nigger!" she jeered, pulling at her bewildered husband's collar; and in this sorry fashion, but still with her head high, she left Zion for ever.

"An' now," concluded Sister Esmeralda Humphreys sedately, "let us all try fo' to lead a bettah life. I shall preach nex' Sunday on the *Seventh Commandment*, an' all them that feels they have broke that commandment is at free liberty to stay away. I shall expec' to see all the res' of you, even if 'tis fallin' weader. Let us all sing befo' we go:

STORIES THAT END WELL

'Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.' ”

Brother Moore arose. "Sist' Humphreys," he announced, "you got de right kin' o' gospil light in you. I cayn't jine in the singin' 'cause since I got my store teef I ain't be'n able to cyar' a chune; but I want to do sumfin de wuk er grace; an' I got up to say dat de nex' socherble gatherin' I'll donate de lemons."

"Dis meetin' accep's with t'anks," shouted Brother Morrow. "Now, le's show our beloved pastor the clouds is swep' away! *All sing!*"

And never had so noble a burst of melody wakened the echoes along the moonlit road as that which made the colonel outside turn, smiling, in his saddle.

"She didn't need me," he mused. "Well, so much the better. I reckon they need a good despot, and they've got one, all right."

THE REAL THING

THE club had gone, save only the guest of the afternoon and a few friends of the hostess, who lingered to congratulate her. It had been a most successful meeting. The guest who had spoken was the president of a southern club. The hearers were warm in their praises of the leisurely music of her southern voice, the charm of her southern manner, so simple and direct and sympathetic, her beauty, her grace, even of the finish of her toilet. She had handled a weighty subject with a light touch (it was the child labor of the south), and her husband being a very large manufacturer, she had spoken out of experience as well as theory. Moreover, she had shown a luminous common sense and a tolerant humor such as did not always brighten such serious themes; and not only the earnest students of the club, but the more flippant members, were aroused to an unusual and captivated attention. Now they were loath to let her go; pressing about, tarrying amid the teacups, and only reluctantly faring forth

“STORIES THAT END WELL”

as the maids appeared to remove the wreckage of the feast. The hostess sank, weary but elated, into a chair by Miss Clymer, the secretary, as the last silken skirt rustled away. Mrs. Waite, the president, who was dallying with socialism, had evidently introduced her new pet to the visitor, who listened politely.

“After all,” suggested Mrs. Clymer, more from the amiable design of steering the conversation within safe limits than out of any craving to exploit her own views, “after all, do we really know *how* these people feel? Is there one of us, for example, who ever had an intimate friend among them, a woman who worked with her hands?”

“Madelaide Dunbar told me once,” remarked the youngest club member, “that she was fonder of her maid than of most of her friends.”

“Which maid?” inquired another. “The one who took her pearl necklace?”

“Nobody took those pearls; Madelaide hid them herself, and forgot all about it, and then found them in her soiled-handkerchief bag! But it wasn’t that one. This one had a little wave to her nose and her eyes were near together.”

THE REAL THING

"Is she with Madelaide now?"

"I think she married. Madelaide was buying teaspoons the other day, and asking for rather light weight—maybe they were for her wedding present."

The South Carolinian smothered a smile. "Madelaide doesn't exactly count," said the hostess.

A new voice took up the theme, a sweet, rather diffident voice, to which, nevertheless, the circle listened with an attention that was almost distinction. She who spoke had been born in the little mid-Western city, and there she had spent her early youth, but she had married a rich man of the East, and was only a visitor to-day. The Ridgelys were people of importance; and Constance Ridgely, the only child, who never went to parties with boys, and only paid visits with her mother, and finally disappeared into vistas of fashion and intimacy with the peerage, was a person of mark. The more, that no splendid transformation had altered her affection for the town, or her gentle, almost shy modesty of manner. She flushed slightly now as she spoke. "The best, the dearest girl friend I ever had, used to work with her hands," said she.

The sudden silence was almost the dumbness of

STORIES THAT END WELL

dismay; but the hostess sprang nimbly to the rescue with a murmur of "How picturesque!"

"Why, of course," cried Mrs. Clymer. "I wish you would tell us of it. You mean Nannie, don't you?"

The Southerner leaned slightly forward, with a look of interest.

"It is so long ago," said Mrs. Curtis, who had been Constance Ridgely, "but something has made me think of Nannie all the afternoon. My friendship with Nannie began almost thirty years ago, when Miss Arthur kept the Pleasant Street kindergarten next to No. 3. The school was a dear; but I remember so well the odd mixture of admiration and dread I felt for the big, tumultuous public school. The boys used to make faces at us, but they were so daring and they turned somersaults so nimbly! And I was devoured with curiosity regarding the little girls who came to school without their nurses. I thought it must be grand! One little girl I singled out. She used to wear a red jersey and a red tam-o'-shanter. She wasn't precisely pretty—according to my childish, wax-dolly standard of beauty—but there was something fascinating in the way her silky mop of

THE REAL THING

brown hair flung itself to the wind, in the flash of her brown eyes and her white teeth and the feather-down lightness of her motions. She was as reckless of her frock as her bones—I was trained to be very careful of both. The fearless rush with which she would slide down the high bank or skin up a tree to the very awful, oscillating top—I can't describe the awesome joy of seeing her! And she was so gay; she had the sweetest, merriest laugh in the world. I loved it. Ah, how many times did I glue my demure little face, which hid so many wild fancies, to a certain knot-hole in that high, high fence of Miss Arthur's, which all our mothers praised because it protected our privacy, watching the boys and girls, and *my* girl run out to recess! And, oh, the blow it was when the hour of recess at the kindergarten was changed! Because the No. 3 boys stole Bennie Olmstead's roller skates, and there was a combat, in which our injured and innocent boys were no match for the wicked No. 3's; and Miss Betty, who attended to minor matters of our physical comfort, being only the third kindergartner, who was learning and received no salary, and of course had most of the drudgery, washed at least four bloody noses and

STORIES THAT END WELL

one bitten ear, and put butchers' brown paper on half a dozen bruises, while the little girls wept for sympathy and Bennie howled for his skates! I wept, too; but it was because I could never any more look through the knot-hole for Nannie. I knew her name, because I heard it so often. And then, in the midst of my dejection, I met her. It was by accident. Tina had come for me in the carriage, but Harland, having an errand at the harness shop, had sent her on ahead, and we two were waiting for him on the curb-stone. Of a sudden we heard an appalling outcry of canine yelps and boyish yells, and I saw a sickening sight, a wretched little dog with a tin can tied to his tail, which clattered against the bricks of the sidewalk as he bounded; and in the can a huge fire-cracker spitting fire! For sheer terror lest I should see the catastrophe, I covered up my face. And *then* I heard my Nannie's voice, 'Here, doggie! Here, poor doggie!' I let my little coward hands drop. I saw her welcome the terrified beast to the shelter of her skirts, while with one swift curve she plucked out the hissing red stick and hurled it with admirable certainty of aim straight at the pursuers. As they scampered away, she told them what she thought of

THE REAL THING

them. Before they could rally, Harland came to the rescue with the carriage; and Tina pushed both of us into it. It was one of those double phaetons which we all used to have then. I don't know whether Tina's mercy would have included the dog; but he included himself with a flying leap into Nannie's lap."

"And that was how you met Nancy?" said Mrs. Clymer. "You took her home, didn't you, and found her conversation on the way very entertaining?"

"Entrancing. She was full of thrilling knowledge of the world. She went to school all alone. Her father was a carpenter, and she had a hatchet and a plane and a brace and bit all her very own. Her mother was dead, but she lived with her aunty, and she invited us most politely to get out and see her aunty, and her papa's shop in the back yard. 'We got a lovely home,' said Nannie."

"Was it?" laughed the youngest clubwoman.

"I thought it was; and, yes, I think it was, now. So specklessly, radiantly tidy. A tiny house of wood, but painted freshly in gray and white, and with a most wonderful garden. That belonged to Nannie's aunt. Nannie said she could make any-

STORIES THAT END WELL

thing with a root grow. I remember she was out amid the phlox—such brilliant, luxuriant phlox as it was! She had on a white apron, which the sun made dazzling. By a wonderful coincidence, the aunt went to Tina's church, and Tina knew her; so Tina let me go inside the house, and the aunt gave us coffee hot from the stove, and delicious little spice cakes just out of the oven; and we carried out some to Harland; and it was a full half-hour before Tina's conscience stirred, and we had to go. By that time Nannie and I were very well acquainted. Yet I had always been amazingly slow about making friends.

"After this episode Nannie and I always nodded and grinned when we saw each other, going or coming from school. The next month Nannie appeared at our Sunday school and announced that she would always attend there if she might be in Miss Browning's class. Miss Browning taught my class. Fancy my happiness! It impressed me very much the way Nannie could make people do what she wanted. In summer another wonder happened. Nannie's father built our new stable. Nannie used to bring him his luncheon daily. Before the summer ended we were great chums."

THE REAL THING

"But did your mother approve of your intimacy?" asked Mrs. Waite, who was bewildered by conduct so opposed to her recollections of the Ridgelys.

"My mother was a wise woman. One day she sent me away on some pretext, and she asked Nannie into the house and showed her pictures and talked to her. Nannie adored my mother; and mamma never threw any obstacles in the way of my seeing Nannie, while Tina was always willing to take me to the Marshes; of course I never went alone. Tina thought Nannie one of the nicest little girls in town; and she had sense enough to see that while I was most often listless and shy with other girls, I was always happy with Nannie. I don't think I can quite express her charm. She was clever, but clever people have bored me. She was pretty, too; and she was a true, delicate-minded little gentlewoman, though her father was a mechanic and her aunt helped the family income by taking in fine washing; but it was none of those things. I think it was that she was so *wholesome!* Always cheerful. Always fearless. By consequence she was the most absolutely truthful being I ever knew. Aunt Kate"—to Mrs. Clymer—"you heard about the red paint? Shall I tell them?" At Mrs.

STORIES THAT END WELL

Clymer's assent she continued, "It was a truly terrible experience. I was never so scared in my life; and I was always getting scared when I was little. Nannie's next-door neighbor was a little girl named Elsa Clarke, whose father was a painter by trade. He was an easy-tempered man, and sometimes used to let us paint. If we daubed ourselves (which we seldom failed to do), he would scrub us off with turpentine. I had some painful scenes with Tina; for even if the paint was gone, the scent of roses, you know. She was going to put a ban on the whole business, when Nannie contrived some oilcloth aprons out of a discarded table covering. This appeased her. One day Elsa's father gave us the dregs of a can of red paint. Another painter who was doing some work in the shop glowered at him, and from him to a white window sash that he had just finished. He was a very gruff old fellow, of whom I stood in dreadful fear. I thought he was very much such a looking man as the ogre in 'Jack and the Beanstalk.' 'Them kids will mess up something if you giye 'em paint, you'll see,' the ogre growled, 'but they better keep clear of *my* sash, if they know what's good for 'em!' With that he followed Elsa's

THE REAL THING

father out of the shop. We were left with our artistic fury. I don't know exactly how the calamity came about, but Elsa wanted the paint can which Nannie was using. If Elsa wanted anything and didn't get it, she grew angry. It was her papa's shop and her papa's paint and she had a right to have it, she *would* have it! 'But he gave it to us all,' I protested, rather shocked at the squabble. Nannie didn't say anything; she went on slapping the paint on a box in vast content. Then Elsa flew into a rage and laid hold of Nannie. I laid hold of her. And a dog in the household, hearing our loud voices, bounded joyously into the fray. And somehow Nannie tripped! The paint, the red, red paint made a ghastly cascade over the snowy whiteness of the ogre's window frame. Stupefied by the enormity of our mishap, we stood staring miserably at each other. Elsa burst into tears. As for me, I could hear my heart thump.

"'He's coming back,' gasped Elsa, 'and papa ain't with him. I saw him box a little girl's ears once jest for using his brush—let's run! Let's *run!* He'll think it was Jumper!' (Jumper was wagging his tail and affectionately sympathizing.)

STORIES THAT END WELL

“ ‘Jumper didn’t do it,’ said Nannie.

“But Elsa was sprinting across the yard. My own terror seemed to clutch me and propel me without volition; I was outside and hurrying after Elsa before I realized. But at the sound of a dreadful, menacing voice I turned my head. Nannie had not fled. She was facing the brutal man who had boxed a little girl’s ears; and he was demanding who had done *That!* The rumble of thunder was in his deep tones. I ran back; but I was in such a panic I had to hold on to the bench to keep me on my feet. Elsa, from the fortress of her kitchen, screamed that Jumper had done it.

“ ‘Hay?’ exploded the man. It seemed to me an appalling interjection.

“ ‘Jumper didn’t do it,’ said Nannie. ‘I fell and the paint splashed. I’ll paint it over for you, all right.’

“ ‘*You!*’ the ogre bellowed, lifting his fist in a passion. ‘You’ve done enough mischief!’ I had been trying to speak, but I was so scared that my mouth only made little choking sounds, but now I did sob, ‘Please, mister, we *made* her do it, Elsa and I. Elsa caught her arm and I caught Elsa’s arm— I’ll pay

THE REAL THING

you for it!' I had my little purse out in my trembling fingers and would have given it all to him. Not Nannie. 'It can't take you an hour to paint it over,' said she. 'Will you take twenty-five cents—that's an hour's wages—and let *me* paint it? I'm awful sorry it happened.'

"'I've a mind to lick you both,' grumbled the man.

"But Nannie didn't flinch; she looked into his face, repeating, 'We're awful sorry; and we'll pay you. It wouldn't do any good to spank us; and I'll paint something else first, to show you I won't daub the glass.'

"'Well, you *are* a cool one,' said the man. I could hardly believe my eyes; he was grinning. Actually he did let Nannie show him how neatly she painted; and the end of it was, he taught us a great deal about painting."

"Didn't Nannie think you were plucky to run back?" said the Southerner. "Truly, Mrs. Curtis, I think you were braver than she!"

Mrs. Curtis shook her head. "I couldn't have done it but for Nannie. Merely being in her presence stiffened my limp courage. I was absurdly timid."

STORIES THAT END WELL

"Well, I don't wonder you were fond of her," cried the youngest member. "What were her people like?"

"Her mother was dead and she was an only child. Her father was the kindest, gentlest of men, with a placid shrewdness such as one may draw from life rather than books. He loved beautiful things. Why, he taught me more about the loveliness of shadows and trees than the great artists, since. And I recognize now how fine was his passion for what he called in his homely way 'a job good enough not to need putty.'"

"I remember Marsh well," said Mrs. Clymer. "He *was* a wonderful workman and a particularly considerate person to have about. He always cleaned up his shavings. I never saw the aunt. She was a nice sort, too, wasn't she, Connie?"

"Indeed she was! She was a widow with three children. The youngest, as Nannie told me with somber importance, was 'bedrid'; she hadn't walked for three years, and the doctor said she 'never would walk in this world'; but Mr. Marsh had made her a most ingenious wheeled chair, which was always at the window, with her little pale, smiling face above

THE REAL THING

it. Then there was little Ned, who was four, and Oscar, who was working his way through college. They all spoke of Oscar with deep respect. He was awfully clever, I was sure; and his mother had a handsome photograph of him on the mantel, under his father's picture."

"That was Jedidiah Marsh," explained Mrs. Waite. "I remember him. He was a very handsome man and a plumber. He wasn't very much of a plumber as I recall him; but he was an inventor always going to patent something, which always turned out to have been discovered before. Finally he did put some machine on the market, and died leaving the business in a tangle, and lots of debts, which his widow and Caleb Marsh paid off to the last cent of interest, although it took them years to do it."

"Yes," said Mrs. Clymer; "he told Mr. Clymer once that maybe he wasn't legally liable for Jed's debts, but there never was a Marsh yet that anybody could find fault with for doing anything dishonest; and they shouldn't begin with Jed, who was all right, whether his washing machine was or wasn't. I have a sneaking idea myself that Caleb Marsh, who was

STORIES THAT END WELL

shrewd in his simple way, did not take Jed's wonderful genius seriously; but Jed's wife did. Once I carried Nannie home when she had been to see you, Connie; and I remember their neat little parlor, with the pictures of Lincoln and Grant and the Rogers groups and some really fine, simple furniture which Marsh had made himself. But I remember best the two portraits over the mantel—a pretty girl I should have known was Nannie's mother, only an enlarged photograph, but very well done, and an oil portrait of Jedidiah, which had been done from a photograph by the gifted daughter of a neighbor, who was learning to paint. It was pretty awful. I wonder didn't Caleb Marsh think so, too."

"If he did, he never said so, you may be sure," said Mrs. Curtis quickly; "and somehow I have a kind of affection for that picture, too. There were always flowers before both of the portraits; perhaps in winter no more than some sprigs of lemon verbena or a pot of ivy, but always some green thing. Do you know, the pictures, and the flowers always before them, that little touch of faithful love, added an intangible and plaintive charm to the homely attraction of the house. I did love that room.

THE REAL THING

It was so sunny, so spotless and peaceful, with the geraniums and the heliotrope in the window, and the white muslin curtains. There was a rug with a very bright and fierce-looking tiger on it before the fireplace (Mr. Marsh *would* have a fireplace), and Mr. Marsh's grandmother's andirons glittered behind the big peacock fan in summer time; and there used to float in through the window the lovely faint odors of old-fashioned flowers—spice pinks and sweetbrier roses and lemon verbenas."

Mrs. Clymer sighed. "I wish there were a better ending to the story."

"Does it end sadly?" asked the Southerner. "Did the little girls grow up and forget each other?"

Mrs. Curtis, who was looking absently over the lawn and the flowers, down the shady street, on which longer and warmer shadows were creeping, back perhaps in a reverie of her childhood, started a little; the sensitive blush which years in the world had not given her power to control, mantled her fair cheek; she turned and gave the Southerner's light smile a serious, almost solemn gaze. When she spoke it was with a gentle coldness, as if she felt she

STORIES THAT END WELL

had been too frank with strangers—at least so the hostess interpreted it.

"I didn't forget; and we were not separated for several years. I went to the high school with Nannie; it was really I who went, for my entreaties overcame my mother's aversion to the clamorous life of a public school. We were so happy; and when I had the trouble with my eyes, Nannie used to read my lessons to me. She learned a whole different course so she could help me. You see, she was awfully clever. The more I knew of other girls, the finer Nannie seemed to me. The—the difference between the classes, the real thing which keeps them apart, is their lack of a common ground of experience. They haven't anything to talk about. I should have been as shy with another girl who worked for her living as she would have been with me, but I knew Nannie so well—I never knew any other woman friend so well, and only one man."

"Whom you married?" said the Southerner with an apologetic accent.

"Yes, poor dear," laughed Mrs. Curtis. "It wasn't treating him well, perhaps, but he brought it on himself."

THE REAL THING

"Did you go through the high school with your friend?" Mrs. Waite's deep voice was heard again.
"But no, surely you weren't a graduate?"

"No; we went to Europe in my second year. I cried myself ill when we parted. My only comfort was that Nannie and I had promised each other that we would go to college together. Nannie was already earning money by her carving. Still—it was bitter. Youth can suffer so easily and so horribly!"

"Yet," said Mrs. Clymer, "though I admit you were a woeful object, Connie, I thought at the time, and I think now, that Nannie suffered the most. She didn't shed a tear that morning when she came up to your house to say good-by; and I went with you to the depot; but there was a look in her eyes which haunted me. And when she stood in the driveway as we rolled away, watching the carriage, and you turned and she waved her hand and smiled—I felt as if I had seen a surgical operation."

"And then? Oh, Mrs. Curtis, that wasn't the end of it?" cried the youngest member.

"Oh, no. I missed Nannie amid all the change and excitement; and I wrote her often. At first she wrote me as often. Now I can appreciate how hard

STORIES THAT END WELL

she must have tried to collect the little items of news likely to interest me. And they were all about girls whom she barely knew, and things remote from her. Somehow she found out about everything. It was she who first wrote about when Annie Baylor had scarlet fever, and she who told first of that astounding happening, Mary Taine Willis' engagement. Mary was only three years older than we; it was almost like one of us being engaged. And her reports about the house and the grounds and the horses, my father said, were clearer and more useful than those of the man in charge. But somehow during the last year the letters grew a little less open-hearted and affectionate; a queer film of constraint froze over them, if I may call it that. And on my part I was conscious of a mingling of dread in my delight at the prospect of seeing Nannie when we had come. I knew she would be the same faithful, dear girl whom I should always love; but my Nannie was more—she was the leader, she had charm; I admired her so tremendously, I wondered should I admire her in the same way. Maybe you think that was horrid of me?"

"I don't know"—the Southern woman spoke be-

THE REAL THING

fore the others—"I know it was natural. Well, did you find it different? *Had* she changed?"

"I don't remember; I only remember that, in the first half-hour, my only fear was lest she should be disappointed in *me*. I admired everything about her; her very clothes were so dainty; and I had expected to be superior there, I fancy. But it wasn't that; it was my feeling that she was finer and stronger than my other friends. You know the pretty clothes, the pretty manners, are only signs of the real thing; and Nannie had the real thing, I was sure. But there was always that constraint about her. You would not believe," said Mrs. Curtis gently to the Southerner, "you would not believe how absurdly this intangible reserve of hers hurt me."

"I think it was very nasty of her, myself," laughed the Southerner; "but did it never occur to you that some other friend of yours might have been making mischief? You were a very desirable chum, some one might have filled your friend's head with notions of how different were your classes and walks in life; and how you were too loyal and kind hearted to desert or repel an old friend, but you might find such ties a drag on you. If that happened she would be a

STORIES THAT END WELL

little morbid about making advances. She was probably proud in her own way."

"There was Elsa Clarke," Mrs. Clymer suggested; "she was always trying to be intimate with you; and if ever there was a sly little climber, it was she."

"Wait a minute!" exclaimed the hostess. "I am beginning to reminisce, myself. Wasn't there a boy in the Marsh family, Nannie Marsh's brother or cousin? Yes, her cousin, Oscar. Why, to be sure. He came back from college and was a clerk in Norris Blanchard's store, and fell madly in love with Gladys Blanchard. She treated him abominably, they did say. Led him on, and then married that young man from Massachusetts; and Oscar shot himself in the front yard while they were standing up under the floral bell."

"How ghastly," murmured the youngest member, "to kill himself—"

"Oh, it didn't kill him, though they thought he would die. I don't know but his uncle wondered sometimes if it wouldn't have been better. For after he got up he took to drink and notions—wild, anarchistic, socialistic—"

THE REAL THING

"He couldn't take to them both at the same time," Mrs. Waite interrupted with fervor. "They are absolutely antagonistic, socialism—"

"Yes, yes, to be sure"—the hostess hastily turned a conversational switch before the collision—"of course I didn't mean to say he believed in *both*, only that he took to making fierce speeches at the populist meetings, and wrote articles for the papers, girding at the rich. And he used to get drunk. The poor Marshes felt awfully. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if that was what made Nannie a little shy and stiff. Did she tell you about Oscar's tragedy?"

"Not until I found it out myself. I somehow had the feeling that I wasn't so gladly welcomed as I used to be. And Mrs. Marsh was changed and saddened. But the little chair was no longer by the window; and I knew the mother grieved. Dear little Hattie, always so patient and so pleased with every little thing. One day Nannie was walking home with me, and we met Oscar. After that I knew. I will own up, when I saw his condition, I—I told you I was a coward—I simply turned and ran away. To be sure, Nannie had seen him also, and said suddenly, 'Good-by, Connie; I can't go any farther'; but

STORIES THAT END WELL

that is only a mitigation, not an excuse. I was so ashamed of myself I hardly slept all night. Nannie was coming to see me the next afternoon. I was awfully afraid she wouldn't come, and almost as afraid to see her when she did come. And when she began to talk, I couldn't think of anything better than to kiss her, with my eyes shut—as if I were going to have a tooth pulled! We both cried. It gave me a weird, earthquaky sensation to see Nannie cry. I had never, through all our years of intimacy, seen her cry. But almost immediately she pulled herself together, and said, 'Well, I'm not going to stand it. Daddy has found a place in the country where Oscar can go and learn the business and then be a partner. If he has a little property of his own he will stop wanting to overturn things so bad. So—he's going; and he did seem to feel bad about making aunty so wretched; and he's promised to give up drinking *and* talking; so I don't know what I'm crying about, unless it is having to give up going to college with you! But it's only putting it off for a year. I'll make it all back by then; I'm going into the furniture factory this summer.' But when I saw the family I realized for the first time what this education,

THE REAL THING

which we take so lightly, indeed often with weariness, means to those who have to deny themselves for it. The love of it was a passion with Nannie's people. They seemed to think a college was a wonderful place, where one learned all the secrets of life and art and knowledge. When they spoke of it their voices would drop reverentially, as they dropped when they spoke of heaven. To have this glory for Nannie put off another year seemed cruel to them. 'Well,' I suggested to Mr. Marsh, 'at least it will be I who will have to miss her, and not you.' 'It's wicked to take such comfort,' said he, 'but I guess I can't help taking it a mite. Nannie is so very comforting and pleasant to have around.' "

"He certainly was a nice man," said Mrs. Clymer. "Do you remember him beaming at Nannie's graduation? I thought I should be bored, but I wasn't; and you, my dear, were a little drama of delight by yourself, so scared when she began, and so radiant presently; and darting such furious glances at Elsa Clarke."

"Well," retorted Mrs. Curtis, "wasn't she whispering all through the essay to a boy she had with her! But she was on the stage afterward, before any

STORIES THAT END WELL

of us, and she had sent Nannie a most impressive and expensive bouquet ; and she was hugging her and making joyful noise over her when my father and I came up. Father paid her the prettiest of compliments and called her Miss Nannie. Her own father and her aunt and Ned stood by, with Oscar, who had come in from the country for this important occasion. Mr. Marsh did not say a word. But I never knew before how many different kinds of smiles a man could smile. And somehow, after that evening, although Nannie was so little affected by the glamour of it all, I was provoked with her ; somehow, she was more like her old gay self with me. Why do you suppose, Mrs. Atherton?"

"I suppose," ventured the Southerner, smiling, "because she felt that her little triumph (no doubt she overvalued it, in spite of the level head you give her) ; she felt it made her a little better worth your friendship. But—what happened next? You went to college?"

"Yes, I went ; and we had to have that odious little Elsa with us, because she was going, too. I was most dolefully homesick ; and oh, how I missed Nannie! I wrote her, if I weren't so afraid of the fero-

THE REAL THING

cious cabmen who roared so at one, I should run away, and it was all her fault—”

“Your father did want—” Mrs. Curtis cut Mrs. Clymer’s sentence off with a quick “Ah, they wouldn’t accept; they were quite as proud as we. However, the time dragged itself away, and I went home for the Christmas holidays. I found Nannie in very different circumstances, but quite as cheerful. She was working in the factory, and earning good wages, and she had all sorts of racy experiences with human nature to relate. How the whole family hung on my college stories! And Oscar was doing well, and becoming cheerful, and they could all talk proudly about him again! They comforted me as much as my own people, and I went back with a show of courage. Nannie wrote me every week. I don’t know just when I began to feel a change in the letters, not in their affection or their gaiety; but she no longer told me so much about her studies (for she wanted to keep up with me and enter in the second year); after a while she hardly mentioned them; yet she *had* shown the keenest interest. My people came on east for me that summer, and as we made several visits, it was late in the summer when we came

STORIES THAT END WELL

home. Although I had noticed this change in Nannie's letters, I had not dreamed what it really meant; and I was not prepared for the shock I received. She greeted me with all her old affection; but at my first inquiry about her savings, she answered, 'Yes, I have enough—if I go.' 'If!' I cried. 'Don't be talking of if's!' 'Indeed, I ought not,' she answered very gravely, 'for there is no if about it; I know that I oughtn't to go. It isn't fair to the others.' 'But they want you to go!' I pleaded in inexpressible dismay. 'It will be the awfulest disappointment!' It seems to me that I still remember every word of her reply. She said that she knew it, that her education had been the whole family's day dream. But that, in the first place, it would be harder than they would admit for them to have her go. 'If it were only this it would be hard,' she said, 'but we could bear it; but—it isn't. What they couldn't bear would be to—to have me grow away from them. I *couldn't*, truly; but—you know Elsa is at home now. She talks of nothing but her college, her college friends, her high marks at exams, her basketball team, and all that. She is always complaining of her own people's plain ways. Connie, I can see so plainly that when

THE REAL THING

she has finished the education which her parents are pinching themselves to give her she will use it to establish herself as far as possible from them.'

"‘Oh, Elsa?’ I sniffed. ‘I can believe anything of Elsa. *You* couldn’t be so horrid and snobbish !’

“‘She doesn’t mean to be horrid, or know she is; she speaks of her mother with tears in her eyes. It is only that she has gone into another world from them, and wants to stay there. I don’t want to go into any other world than my father’s and the others’. I don’t want any better taste than they have! I want better taste and I want them to have it, but I want us all to get it together. Whatever I get I want to share with them. I couldn’t if I went away. I used to think I could bring it all back in a lump; but I know better now. You can’t pot culture and give it away as you choose; you have to grow it from the seed. What I am afraid of is that they should not get what I get. So far they have; why, aunty knows more of Virgil from hearing me translate aloud than I do myself; and dad is wonderful in geometry, and he has taught *me* to love Charles Lamb, whom he loved just from the extracts in the literature. First he bought the Essays, then I bought

STORIES THAT END WELL

him the Letters. It is that way with so many things. You know—she laughed—you know we have some long-legged Fra Angelico angels instead of the pictures of Lincoln and Grant; they are in other frames, which my father made, and hang in the hall; and the Rogers groups have gone up-stairs, and, Connie, Oscar and dad and I have had a real artist paint a pastel of Uncle Jed as a present for aunty, and we have it in the parlor now; and nobody's feelings are hurt; we were all pleased together. That is the right way. I can't take any other way. Not even to be with you, Connie. No, dear, I can't go.' I am afraid I made it harder for her with my selfish grief, and her father almost frantically opposed the sacrifice, he who was always so tranquil; and Oscar was angry, and Ned cried. Oh, we gave poor Nannie a frightful quarter of an hour; but she did not go."

"What became of her? How did it turn out in the end?" asked the youngest member.

"I don't know," answered Mrs. Curtis.

"Did her conduct make a breach between you?" Mrs. Waite showed the dawn of disapproval on her brow.

"Surely not. But in my next year we went abroad

THE REAL THING

unexpectedly, on account of my mother's health. We stayed four years; and while we were away, my grandfather died, and the house here was sold. At first we both wrote often; but, as the years went by, insensibly we wrote less often. Both of us, I suppose. That same film of constraint was over Nannie's letters that had been over her manner before. Then it went away. This time it came, and did not go away. Then the letters ceased altogether. When I—when I found I was going to marry Mr. Curtis, I wrote Nannie the very first letter. There was no answer. I wrote again—not once, but many times. After a long while my letters came back to me, unopened, with the post-office inscription, 'Not to be found.' I wrote to Elsa, who was home. I asked her for Nannie's address; for some word about her. She wrote back that the Marshes had sold their house after Oscar's trouble, to raise money for his defense; and they had all moved away, she believed, to Dakota, but she didn't know where. She said Nannie avoided everybody."

"And what *was* Oscar's trouble?" demanded Mrs. Waite. "I know there was some iniquitous blunder of the law, but what exactly was it?"

STORIES THAT END WELL

Mrs. Clymer, who had been watching Mrs. Curtis attentively, explained while the other woman seemed searching for the right words. "Oscar was convicted of burning the store of a rival merchant who had treated him very treacherously. He had lost his temper, and threatened the man. What he meant, he explained, was to give him a good hiding. But he was overheard; and when, that night, the store burned, and Oscar was discovered to have gone there, suspicion lighted on him. Of course, all his former wild actions were brought up against him, although he had quite reformed. There had been a number of incendiary fires, and you know how people always want *somebody* punished; poor Oscar Marsh was sent to the penitentiary, after his people had spent almost their last dollar to defend him. They moved away, and all trace of them was lost. It is a wretched story. And really, Oscar was innocent. A year afterward (I always credited it mostly to Nannie) it was discovered that the man had set fire to the store himself. Nannie got the insurance company on his trail. He fled. The governor pardoned Oscar. And that is all any of us know."

THE REAL THING

"It is a sad story," sighed Mrs. Waite. "I think she did wrong not to educate herself."

"I think she did quite right," said Mrs. Curtis.

"But as it was, the sacrifice was so useless," urged the youngest member. "She didn't lift them; they only all went under the waves together."

"Not necessarily," objected the Southerner. "Why be so dismal? Why not be cheerful? They had their good trade and their good sense and their love for each other. I am going to suppose that those things are more than money, and that they went to work in a new place, rose little by little, and then more and more, and are all prosperous and respected, and Miss Nannie has married the young superintendent of her new factory, who has now risen to be the main partner; he is of an old though impoverished family—"

"You think so much of family in the South, don't you?" interjected Mrs. Waite.

"Well, we have so many old and good but impoverished families there, you see. I think the chances are she married such a boy; and they have made money, and Oscar has a nice plantation near them, and is married to a sweet little Southern girl, and

STORIES THAT END WELL

his mother adores the baby ; and Ned goes to college, and Mr. Marsh is a prosperous builder, high in the Scottish Rite, and growing used to his dress coat—”

“But,” said the hostess, “you are having them all south ; they went to Dakota.”

“Why, so they did ! I forgot,” cried the Southerner. “Maybe it was a mistake ; and anyhow, they would have done better to go south !”

Everybody laughed and Mrs. Curtis’ fine eyes lit up. “I perceive you are a psychic, Mrs. Atherton,” she said gaily. “And they *did* go south. Being a psychic, can’t you tell me something ? Why didn’t Nannie answer my letters ?”

The Southerner dropped her chin and looked upward in the pose of a seer ; no one noticed Mrs. Clymer’s sudden movement or the ripple of quick emotion in Mrs. Curtis’ face. “That’s easy,” she responded. “I see a slim girl with dark hair walking with another girl who answers to the name of Elsa. The dark-haired girl gives her a letter, stamped, but not addressed. She has sent a letter to her friend, which has not reached her. Letters sometimes do not reach people who are hurrying through Egypt or—or other places. This letter she gives to Elsa,

THE REAL THING

who is to marry the cousin of an acquaintance of the friend. She is to post it—*voilà tout!*"

"She *was* engaged to Bertha Miller's cousin; and she did try awfully hard to be intimate with Constance," whispered Mrs. Clymer in the hostess' ear; while everybody laughed again.

"He drinks like a fish," returned the hostess irrelevantly.

"Oh, Mrs. Atherton, don't stop, tell us more," begged the youngest member. "I feel so interested in Nannie. Has she any children?" The youngest member had just acquired the most remarkable baby in the world.

"I reckon," jested the Southerner, "two or three. Two boys, let us say—"

"How nice!" cried Mrs. Curtis, coloring prettily. "I have two boys."

"And—I think a little girl, whom she has named Constance, Constance Ridgely—Are we going, Mrs. Clymer?"

Mrs. Clymer laid a kindly hand on her shoulder, saying, "Yes, my dear, I must go; but as I am stopping on my way, I shall walk; and Constance will take care of you."

STORIES THAT END WELL

"Thank you, Aunt Kate," said Mrs. Curtis, so low the others—except the Southerner—did not hear. They were alone in the carriage before she made any sign of that which had stirred her profoundly. Then she turned on her companion a pale face and eyes that were swimming in tears.

"Yes, dear," said the Southerner, whose lips were smiling, but whose own eyes were wet.

"Oh—*Nannie!*" cried Constance Ridgely. And the faces of the two women were strangely like the faces of the two little girls who had found each other years and years ago.

THE OLD PARTISAN

A STORY OF THE REPUBLICAN CONVENTION OF 1896

I SAT so far back in the gallery that my opinion of my delegate friend dwindled with every session. Nevertheless my unimportant seat had its advantages. I could see the vast assembly and watch the throbbing of the Republican pulse if I could not hear its heart-beats. Therefore, perhaps, I studied my neighbors more than I might study them under different circumstances. The great wooden hall had its transient and unsubstantial character stamped on every bare wooden joist and unclinched nail. It was gaudy with flags and bunting and cheap portraits. There were tin bannerettes crookedly marshaled on the floor, to indicate the homes of the different states. A few delegates, doubtless new to the business and over-zealous, were already on the floor, but none of the principals were visible. They were perspiring and arguing in those committee rooms, those hotel lobbies and crowded hotel rooms

THE OLD PARTISAN

where the real business of the convention was already done and neatly prepared for presentation to the nation. I had nothing to keep me from studying my neighbors. In front of me sat two people who had occupied the same seats at every session that I was present, a young girl and an old man. The girl wore the omnipresent shirt waist (of pretty blue and white tints, with snowy cuffs and collar), and her green straw hat was decked with blue corn-flowers, from which I inferred that she had an eye on the fashions. Her black hair was thick and glossy under the green straw. I thought that she had a graceful neck. It was very white. Whiter than her face, which kept a touch of sunburn, as if she were often out in the open air. Somehow I concluded that she was a shop-girl and rode a wheel. If I were wrong it is not likely that I shall ever know.

The old man I fancied, was not so old as he looked; his delicate, haggard profile may have owed its sunken lines and the dim eye to sickness rather than to years. He wore the heavy black broadcloth of the rural politician, and his coat sagged over his narrow chest as if he had left his waistcoat at home.

THE OLD PARTISAN

On his coat lapel were four old-fashioned Blaine badges. Incessantly he fanned himself.

"It can't be they ain't going to nominate him to-day?" he asked rather than asserted, his voice breaking on the higher notes, the mere wreck of a voice.

"Oh, maybe later," the girl reassured him.

"Well, I wanted to attend a Republican convention once more before I died. Your ma would have it I wasn't strong enough; but I knew better; you and I knew better; didn't we, Jenny?"

She made no answer except to pat his thin, ribbed brown hand with her soft, white, slim one; but there was a world of sympathy in the gesture and her silent smile.

"I wonder what your ma said when she came down-stairs and found the letter, and us gone," he cackled with the garrulous glee of a child recounting successful mischief; "made me think of the times when you was little and I stole you away for the circus. Once, your pa thought you was lost—'member? And once, you had on your school dress and you'd tore it—she did scold you that time. But we had fun when they used to let me have money, didn't we, Jenny?"

STORIES THAT END WELL

"Well, now I earn money, we have good times, too, grandpa," said Jenny, smiling the same tender, comprehending smile.

"We do that; I don't know what I would do 'cept for you, lambie, and this is—this is a grand time, Jenny, you look and listen; it's a great thing to see a nation making its principles and its president—and such a president!"

He half turned his head as he spoke, with a mounting enthusiasm, thus bringing his flushing face and eager eyes—no longer dim—into the focus of his next neighbor's bright gray eyes. The neighbor was a young man, not very young, but hardly to be called elderly, of an alert bearing and kindly smile.

"I think him a pretty fair man myself," said the other with a jocose understatement; "I come from his town."

What was there in such a simple statement to bring a distinctly anxious look into the young girl's soft eyes? There it was; one could not mistake it.

"Well!" said the old man: there was a flattering deference in his voice. "Well, well. And—and maybe you've seen him lately?" The quavering

THE OLD PARTISAN

tones sharpened with a keener feeling; it was almost as if the man were inquiring for some one on whom he had a great stake of affection. "How did he look? Was he better, stronger?"

"Oh, he looked elegant," said the Ohio man, easily, but with a disconcerted side glance at the girl whose eyes were imploring him.

"I've been a Blaine man ever since he was run the time Bob Ingersoll nominated him," said the old man, who sighed as if relieved. "I was at that convention and heard the speech—"

"Ah, that was a speech to hear," said a man behind, and two or three men edged their heads nearer.

The old Republican straightened his bent shoulders, his winter-stung features softened and warmed at the manifestation of interest, his voice sank to the confidential undertone of the narrator.

"You're right, sir, right; it was a magnificent speech. I can see him jest as he stood there, a stoutish, good-looking man, smooth-faced, his eye straight ahead, and an alternate that sat next me—I was an alternate; I've been an alternate four times; I could have been a delegate, but I says, 'No, abler men than me are wanting it; I'm willing to fight in

STORIES THAT END WELL

the ranks.' But I wished I had a vote, a free vote that day, I tell you. The alternate near me, he says, 'You'll hear something fine now; I've heard him speak.' "

"You did, too, I guess."

"We could hear from the first minute. That kinder fixed our attention. He had a mellow, rich kind of voice that melted into our ears. We found ourselves listening and liking him from the first sentence. At first he was as quiet as a summer breeze, but presently he began to warm up, and the words flowed out like a stream of jewels. It was electrifying: it was thrilling, sir; it took us off our feet before we knew it, and when he came to the climax, those of us that weren't yelling in the aisles were jumping up and down on our chairs! I know I found myself prancing up and down on my own hat on a chair, swinging somebody else's hat and screaming at the top of my voice, with the tears running down my cheeks. God! sir, there were men there on their feet cheering their throats out that had to vote against Blaine afterward—had to, because they were there instructed—no more free will than a checked trunk!" The light died out of his

THE OLD PARTISAN

face. "Yes, sir, a great speech; never so great a speech, whoever made it; but it did no good, he wasn't nominated, and when we did nominate him we were cheated out of our victory. Well, we'll do better this day."

"We will that," said the other man, heartily; "McKinley—"

"You'll excuse me"—the old man struck in with a deprecating air, yet under the apology something fiercely eager and anxious that glued the hearer's eyes to his quivering old face—"You'll excuse me. I—I am a considerable of an invalid and I don't keep the run of things as I used to. You see, I live with my daughter, and you know how women folks are, fretting lest things should make you sick, and my girl she worries so, me reading the papers. Fact is I got a shock once, an awful shock"—he shivered involuntarily and his dim eyes clouded—"and it worried her seeing me read. Hadn't ought to; it don't worry Jenny here, who often gets me a paper, quiet like; but you know how it is with women—it's easier giving them their head a little—and so I don't see many papers, and I kinder dropped off. It seems queer, but I don't exactly sense it about this Mc-

STORIES THAT END WELL

Kinley. Is he running against Blaine or jest for vice?"

The girl, under some feminine pretext of dropping and reaching for her handkerchief, threw upward a glance of appeal at the interlocutor. Hurriedly she stepped into the conversation. "My grandfather read a false report about—about Mr. Blaine's sickness, and he was not well at the time, and it brought on a bad attack."

"I understand," said the listener, with a grave nod of his head and movement of his eyes in the girl's direction.

"But about McKinley?" the old man persisted.

"He's for vice-president," the girl announced, her eyes fixed on the hesitating man from Canton. I have often admired the intrepid fashion in which a woman will put her conscience at a moral hedge, while a man of no finer spiritual fiber will be straining his eyes to find a hole through which he can crawl.

"McKinley is not opposed to Blaine, is he?" she asked the man.

"The Republican party has no name that is more loved than that of James G. Blaine," said the man, gravely.

THE OLD PARTISAN

"That's so, that's so!" the old partisan assented eagerly; "to my mind he's the logical candidate."

The Canton man nodded, and asked if he had ever seen Blaine.

"Once, only once. I was on a delegation sent to wait on him and ask him to our town to speak—he was in Cincinnati. I held out my hand when my turn came, and the chairman nearly knocked the breath out of me by saying, 'Here's the man gave more to our campaign fund and worked harder than any man in the county, and we all worked hard for you, too.' Well, Mr. Blaine looked at me. You know the intent way he looks. He has the most wonderful eyes; look right at you and seem to bore into you like a gimlet. I felt as if he was looking right down into my soul, and I tell you I was glad, for I choked up so I couldn't find a word, not a word, and I was ready and fluent enough in those days, too, I can tell you; but I stood there filling up, and squeezed his hand and gulped and got red, like a fool. But he understood. 'I have heard of your loyalty to Republican principles, Mr. Painter,' says he, in that beautiful voice of his that was like a violin; and I burst in—I couldn't help it—'It ain't

STORIES THAT END WELL

loyalty to Republican principles, it's to you.' I said that right out. And he smiled, and said he, 'Well, that's wrong, but it isn't for me to quarrel with you there, Mr. Painter,' and then they pushed me along; but twice while the talk was going on I saw him look my way and caught his eye, and he smiled, and when we were all shaking hands for good-by he shook hands with a good firm grip, and said he, 'Good-by, Mr. Painter; I hope we shall meet again.' "

The old man drew a long sigh. "Those few moments paid for everything," he said. "I've never seen him since. I've been sick and lost money. I ain't the man I was. I never shall be put on any delegation again, or be sent to any convention; but I thought if I could only go once more to a Republican convention and hear them holler for Blaine, and holler once more myself, I'd be willinger to die. And I told Tom Hale that, and he and Jenny raised the money. Yes, Jenny, I'm going to tell—he and Jenny put off being married a bit so's I could go, and go on plenty of money. Jenny, she worked a month longer to have plenty, and Tom, he slipped ten dollars into my hand unbeknown to her, jest as we were going, so I'd always have a dime to give

THE OLD PARTISAN

the waiter or the porter. I was never one of these hayseed farmers, too stingy to give a colored boy a dime when he'd done his best. I didn't need no money for badges; I got my old badges—see!"

He pushed out the lapel of his coat, covered with old-fashioned frayed bits of tinsel and ribbon, smiling confidently. The girl had flushed crimson to the rim of her white collar; but there was not a trace of petulance in her air; and, all at once looking at him, her eyes filled with tears.

"Tom's an awful good fellow," he said, "an awful good fellow."

"I'm sure of that," said the Canton man, with the frank American friendliness, making a little bow in Miss Jenny's direction; "but see here, Mr. Painter, do you come from Izard? Are you the man that saved the county for the Republicans by mortgaging his farm and then going on a house-to-house canvass?"

"That's me," the old man acquiesced, blushing with pleasure; "I didn't think, though, that it was known outside—"

"Things go further than you guess. I'm a newspaper man, and I can tell you that I shall speak of it

STORIES THAT END WELL

again in my paper. Well, I guess they've got through with their mail, and the platform's coming in."

Thus he brushed aside the old man's agitated thanks.

"One moment," said the old man, "who—who's going to nominate him?"

For the space of an eyeblink the kindly Canton man looked embarrassed, then he said, briskly: "Foraker, Foraker, of Ohio—he's the principal one. That's he now, chairman of the committee on resolutions. He's there, the tall man with the mustache—"

"Isn't that elderly man, with the stoop shoulders and the chin beard and caved-in face, Teller?" It was a man near me, on the seat behind, who spoke, tapping the Canton man with his fan, to attract attention; already the pitiful concerns of the old man who was "a little off" (as I had heard some one on the seat whisper) were sucked out of notice in the whirlpool of the approaching political storm.

"Yes, that's Teller," answered the Canton man, his mouth straightening and growing thin.

"Is it to be a bolt?"

THE OLD PARTISAN

The Canton man nodded, at which the other whistled and communicated the information to his neighbors, one of whom remarked, "Let 'em bolt and be damned!" A general, subtle excitement seemed to communicate its vibrations to all the gallery. Perhaps I should except the old partisan; he questioned the girl in a whisper, and then, seeming to be satisfied, watched the strange scene that ensued with an expression of patient weariness. The girl explained parts of the platform to him and he assented; it was good Republican doctrine, he said, but what did they mean with all this talk against the money; were they having trouble with the mining states again? The Canton man stopped to explain—he certainly was good-humored.

During the next twenty minutes, filled as they were with savage emotion, while the galleries, like the floor, were on their chairs yelling, cheering, brandishing flags and fists and fans and pampas plumes of red, white and blue at the little band of silver men who marched through the ranks of their former comrades; he stood, he waved his fan in his feeble old hand, but he did not shout. "You must excuse me," said he, "I'm all right on the

STORIES THAT END WELL

money question, but I'm saving my voice to shout for him!"

"That's right," said the Canton man; but he cast a backward glance which said as plainly as a glance can speak, "I wish I were out of this!"

Meanwhile, with an absent but happy smile, the old Blaine man was beating time to the vast waves of sound that rose and swelled above the band, above the cheering, above the cries of anger and scorn, the tremendous chorus that had stiffened men's hearts as they marched to death and rung through streets filled with armies and thrilled the waiting hearts at home:

"Three cheers for the red, white and blue!

Three cheers for the red, white and blue!

The army and navy for ever, three cheers for the red, white and blue!"

But when the chairman had stilled the tumult and made his grim comment, "There appear to be enough delegates left to transact business," the old partisan cast his eyes down to the floor with a chuckle. "I can't see the hole they made, it's so

THE OLD PARTISAN

small. Say, ain't he a magnificent chairman; you can hear every word he says!"

"Bully chairman," said a cheerful "rooter" in the rear, who had enjoyed the episode more than words can say, and had cheered the passing of Silver with such choice quotations from popular songs as "*Good-by, my lover, good-by,*" and "*Just mention that you saw me,*" and plainly felt that he, too, had adorned the moment. "I nearly missed coming this morning, and I wouldn't have missed it for a tenner; they're going to nominate now."

The old man caught his breath; then he smiled. "I'll help you shout pretty soon," said he, while he sat down very carefully.

The "rooter," a good-looking young fellow with a Reed button and three or four gaudy badges decking his crash coat, nodded and tapped his temple furtively, still retaining his expression of radiant good-nature. The Canton man nodded and frowned.

I felt that the Canton man need not be afraid. Somehow we were all tacitly taking care that this poor, bewildered soul should not have its little dream of loyal, unselfish satisfaction dispelled.

"Ah, my countrymen," I thought, "you do a hun-

STORIES THAT END WELL

dred crazy things, you crush *les convenances* under foot, you can be fooled by frantic visionaries, but how I love you!"

It was Baldwin of Iowa that made the first speech. He was one of the very few men—I had almost said of the two men—that we in the galleries had the pleasure of hearing; and we could hear every word.

He began with a glowing tribute to Blaine. At the first sentence our old man flung his gray head in the air with the gesture of the war horse when he catches the first, far-off scream of the trumpet. He leaned forward, his features twitching, his eyes burning; the fan dropped out of his limp hand; his fingers, rapping his palm, clenched and loosened themselves unconsciously in an overpowering agitation. His face was white as marble, with ominous blue shadows: but every muscle was astrain; his chest expanded; his shoulders drew back; his mouth was as strong and firm as a young man. For a second we could see what he had been at his prime.

Then the orator's climax came, and the name—the magic name that was its own campaign cry in itself.

The old partisan leaped to his feet; he waved his

THE OLD PARTISAN

hands above his head; wild, strange, in his white flame of excitement. He shouted; and we all shouted with him, the McKinley man and the Reed man vieing with each other (I here offer my testimony as to the scope and quality of that young Reed man's voice), and the air rang about us: "Blaine! Blaine! James G. Blaine!" He shrieked the name again and again, goading into life the waning applause. Then in an instant his will snapped under the strain; his gray beard tilted in the air; his gray head went back on his neck.

The Canton man and I caught him in time to ease the fall. We were helped to pull him into the aisle. There were four of us by this time, his granddaughter and the Reed "rooter," besides the Canton man and myself.

We carried him into the wide passageway that led to the seats. The Reed young man ran for water, and, finding none, quickly returned with a glass of lemonade (he was a young fellow ready in shifts), and with it we bathed the old man's face.

Presently he came back, by degrees, to the world; he was not conscious, but we could see that he was not going to die.

STORIES THAT END WELL

"He'll be all right in no time," declared the Reed man. "You had better go back and get your seats, and keep mine!"

I assured both men that I could not return for more than a short time, having an engagement for luncheon.

"That's all right," said the Reed man, turning to the Canton man, "I ain't shouting when Foraker comes; you are. You go back and keep my seat; I'll come in later on Hobart."

So the kindly Canton man returned to the convention for which he was longing, and we remained in our little corner by the window, the young girl fanning the old man, and the young man on the watch for a boy with water. He darted after one; and then the girl turned to me.

No one disturbed us. Below the traffic of a great city roared up to us and a brass band clanged merrily. The crowd hurried past, drawn by the tidings that "the fight was on," and choked the outlets and suffocated the galleries.

"He's been that way ever since he read, suddenly, that Blaine was dead"—she said, lowering her voice to keep it safe from his failing ears—"he had a kind

THE OLD PARTISAN

of a stroke, and ever since he's had the notion that Blaine was alive and was going to be nominated, and his heart was set on going here. Mother was afraid; but when—when he cried to go, I could not help taking him—I didn't know but maybe it might help him; he was such a smart man and such a good man; and he has had trouble about mortgaging the farm; and he worked so hard to get the money back, so mother would feel right. All through the hot weather he worked, and I guess that's how it happened. You don't think it's hurt him? The doctor said he might go. He told T—, a gentleman friend of mine who asked him."

"Oh, dear, no," I exclaimed, "it has been good for him."

I asked for her address, which fortunately was near, and I offered her the cab that was waiting for me. I had some ado to persuade her to accept it; but when I pointed to her grandfather's pale face she did accept it, thanking me in a simple but touching way, and, of course, begging me to visit her at Izard, Ohio.

All this while we had been sedulously fanning the old man, who would occasionally open his eyes for

STORIES THAT END WELL

a second, but gave no other sign of returning consciousness.

The young Reed man came back with the water. He was bathing the old man's forehead in a very skillful and careful way, using my handkerchief, when an uproar of cheering shook the very floor under us and the rafters overhead.

"Who is it?" the old man inquired, feebly.

"Foraker! Foraker!" bellowed the crowd.

"He's nominated him!" muttered the old man; but this time he did not attempt to rise. With a smile of great content he leaned against his granddaughter's strong young frame and listened, while the cheers swelled into a deafening din, an immeasurable tumult of sound, out of which a few strong voices shaped the chorus of the Battle Cry of Freedom, to be caught up by fifteen thousand throats and pealed through the walls far down the city streets to the vast crowd without.

The young Reed "boomer," carried away by the moment, flung his free hand above his head and yelled defiantly: "Three cheers for the man from Maine!" Instantly he caught at his wits, his color turned, and he lifted an abashed face to the young girl.

THE OLD PARTISAN

"But, really, you know, that ain't giving nothing away," he apologized, plucking up heart. "May I do it again?"

The old partisan's eye lighted. "Now they're shouting! That's like old times! Yes, do it again, boy! Blaine! Blaine! James G. Blaine!"

He let us lead him to the carriage, the rapturous smile still on his lips. The "rooter" and I wormed our way through the crowd back to the seats which the kind Canton man had kept for us.

We were quite like old acquaintances now; and he turned to me at once. "Was there ever a politician or a statesman, since Henry Clay, loved so well as James G. Blaine?"

MAX—OR HIS PICTURE

A KNOCK sounded on the principal's door. "That's Florence," she thought; and she sighed in the same breath. The principal had secretly liked Florence Raimund, the best of her two hundred girls, for three years; and, sometimes, she suspected that Florence knew it. Miss Wing sat at her desk. It was a large desk of oak, always kept in blameless order. No one could recall seeing more than one letter at a time lying on the blotter. Any others, yet unread, lay in the wicker tray to the left; the letters read but not answered were in the wicker tray to the right; the answered letters were in appropriate pigeonholes or in ashes, Miss Wing being a firm believer in fire as a confidential agent. Above the desk hung the most interesting object in the room, to the school-girls; in fact it would be hard to gage justly the influence this one, mute and motionless, had over their young imaginations; or how far it was responsible for the rose-tinted halo that be-

MAX—OR HIS PICTURE

yond doubt, glorified the principal for them. The object was a picture, the picture of a young man in the uniform of a captain in the German cuirassiers. His thick light hair was brushed back from a fine and candid forehead. A smile creased his cheek under the warlike curl of his mustachios. It was a smile so happy and so friendly in its happiness, that it won the beholder. The eyes were not large, but even in the black and white of a photograph (the portrait was an ordinary cabinet *carte*) they seemed to sparkle. The young fellow's figure was superb, and held with a military precision and jauntiness. One said, looking at the whole presence, "This man is a good fellow." Viewing him more closely, one might add, "And he is in love." The picture was framed handsomely in a gilded frame. On the desk below, an exquisite vase of Venice lifted a single, perfect rose. For fifteen years a flower had always bloomed thus. Miss Wing had hung the picture herself, fifteen years ago. Then, she was the new principal, and the school was but half its size; and the village people exclaimed at trusting "such a girl" with so much responsibility. During those fifteen years the new building had been built, the school had

STORIES THAT END WELL

grown and flourished; and the gray had crept into Margaret Wing's bright hair. She had so often put on mourning for her near kindred that she had assumed it as her permanent garb. To the certain (and ecstatic) knowledge of the school, she had refused divers offers of marriage from citizens of good repute and substance. But during all the changing years, the picture had kept its place and the fresh flowers had bloomed below. No girl could remember the desk without the picture; and when the old girls visited the school, their eyes would instinctively seek it in its old place; always with a little moving of the heart. Yet no one ever alluded to it to the principal; and no one, not her most trusted teacher, nor her best loved pupil, had ever heard the principal speak of it. The name of the pictured soldier, his story, his relation to Miss Wing; Miss Wing's nearest kindred and friends knew as much about all these as the school—and that was nothing. Nevertheless, the school tradition reported part of a name on the authority of a single incident. Years ago an accident happened to the picture. It was the principal's custom to carry it with her on her journeys, however brief; always taking it down and put-

MAX—OR HIS PICTURE

ting it back in its place herself. On this occasion the floor had been newly polished, and in hanging the picture her chair on which she stood slipped and she fell, while the picture dropped out of her grasp. One of the girls, who was passing, ran to her aid; but she had crawled toward the picture and would have it in her hands before she allowed the girl to aid her to rise—a circumstance, you may be sure, not likely to escape the sharp young eyes. Neither did these same eyes miss the further circumstance that the jar had shifted the *carte* in the frame and a line of writing, hitherto hidden, was staring out at the world. The hand was the sharp, minute German hand, but the words were English; the girl took them in at an eyeblink, as she handed the picture to Miss Wing: "*Thine for ever, Max.*" Miss Wing made no comment; perhaps she supposed that the girl had not seen, perhaps—in any case she was silent.

Of course, the new light flooded the school gossip immediately. But there never came any more; every new girl was free to work her own will on Miss Wing's romance. Was "Max" dead? Had they parted because of any act on the woman's part? Surely he could not have been false, to receive that

STORIES THAT END WELL

daily oblation of flowers. It was more likely that she thus expressed an imperishable regret. Youth, ever fanciful, played with all manner of dainty and plaintive variations on the theme. Its very mystery was its poignant charm; since each tender young soul created a new romance and a new appeal. Elusive and pathetic, it hovered on the edge of these young lives, like the perfume of a flower. And its influence was the more potent that it asked for nothing. It is not too much to say that the spectacle of that gentle and reticent faithfulness was the strongest element in the school atmosphere. Certainly, because of it, Miss Wing had greater power over her scholars. She was a woman of ability and gentle force; by nature a little aloof, a little precise, able to feel deeply, but not able to express her sympathies or her pain. Without her mysterious sorrow, she would have seemed to young girls a thought too admirable; they would have been chilled by her virtues: but as it was, their perception that she had lived deeply, that she had suffered, that she had been loved and had loved eternally, opened their hearts. They would have admired her, now they adored her. By degrees, and insensibly to herself, she became the

MAX—OR HIS PICTURE

confessor of her little world. After they left school, her girls brought her their perplexities of the heart. Wives came to her with cruel dilemmas which they shrank from revealing to their own mothers—perhaps because the mothers could not be trusted to plead for the erring husband so well; for a woman who loves complains, not to be justified herself, but to hear her lover's misconduct excused and his love proved against her doubts. Before they left school, the girls confessed their faults and failings and strivings of conscience with the same eagerness with which they asked counsel in their innocent romances of friendship or the sorrows of trigonometry, and they accepted any penance directed, not only with patience, but a kind of exaltation natural to youth, which finds a secret joy in the exercise of its own fortitude.

To-day, however, Miss Wing sat before the picture which so many young eyes had studied with such vague, yet ardent, sympathy, and pondered over a confidence that had not come. The lack of its coming hurt her; and the tap on her door was welcome, for she thought, "It is she—coming to tell me. Oh, I hope he is the right man."

STORIES THAT END WELL

At her response, the door swung open with a jerk, and the dark-eyed girl who entered was catching her breath, although she tried to make the quick intakes noiseless. There was a look of pale resolution on her features.

"Have you come to let me congratulate you, my dear?" said the principal, rising. The girl colored scarlet. "I've come because I had to, because I couldn't deceive you," she blurted. "Miss Wing, it isn't so. I let Miss Parker think so; but I'm not engaged to him."

"Sit down, dear," said Miss Wing. The soft cadence of her voice did not roughen. She sat down when her guest sat, and leaned back in her desk chair, folding her slim, white hands. There were flashing rings on her hands; and the girls used to wonder which ring "Max" had given her. They favored the sapphire, set between two diamonds, because of its beauty ("a real Cashmere, you know"), and because, whether she wore other rings or not, this always kept its place.

"Now, tell me," said Miss Wing.

"I had a letter from him this morning; it was just a note in one of Helen Grier's"—the girl's lithe

MAX—OR HIS PICTURE

form was erect in the chair, every muscle tense; she looked past Miss Wing to the wall and spoke in toneless voice; no one could see that she was driving straight on to her purpose, over her own writhing nerves—"all he said was that he had been called back to Germany—"

"Is he a German? Miss Parker said his name was Cutler."

"It is Butler," the girl said, flinging her head back, while a spark crept into her liquid, troubled, dark eyes, "but he *is* a German. Don't you know the Butlers in 'Wallenstein?' You know he was a real man; and he founded a family. He—my—my friend is the Count von Butler." Miss Wing's chair, like other desk chairs, was set on a pivot; she turned very slightly and slowly, at the same time resting her elbow on the desk. The girl ventured a timid glance at her, and thought that she looked sterner, wherefore her heart sank; but she only continued the faster: "He isn't in America just to travel; he was sent by his government to watch the Cuban war. He's very brave; and he isn't a bit like a foreigner and hasn't any nasty supercilious notions about women. Mr. Grier says he has a *future*. And

STORIES THAT END WELL

really, Miss Wing, he is just like a—a—a kind of knight."

"Where did you meet him?"

"At Helen's last summer. And he was going out to Minneapolis to see papa, I—I think. But he got a cable of his uncle's death. And his two little cousins died last year; so now he is the head of the family; and he must go to Germany at once. For his father is dead, you know. So he wrote (in Helen's letter, because he is so—so awfully proper!) asking to let him come here and take me to drive—in the American fashion. I know who put him up to that scheme; it was Helen. I had to ask Miss Parker, because you were out; and she said if he wasn't a relation or the man I was going to marry I couldn't go. 'Of course, if he were the man you expect to marry,' she said, and—and I—I said, 'But he is!' Just like that. I can't fancy how I came to say such a thing, but when it was said I didn't know how to explain; and I was so awfully ashamed; and, besides"—she lifted her eyes in the frank and direct gaze that Miss Wing always liked—"besides, I do want to see him."

"And do you expect him to ask you to marry

MAX—OR HIS PICTURE

him?" said Miss Wing, with a deepening of the color on her cheek, which went out suddenly like the flame of a lamp in the wind.

Florence Raimund blushed again, but this time she laughed: "I don't know. He is so awfully proper," said she, "and he hasn't had a chance to ask papa; but—I think he wants to."

"In that case, isn't he the man whom you expect to marry?" asked Miss Wing dryly. "But it was deceiving her just the same. I am glad you came, Florence."

Here the girl looked up; and something in Miss Wing's eyes made her dash across the room to fling herself on her knees before that lady with an inarticulate gasp between a sob and a laugh, and the sentences came in a rush: "I *had* to come! I couldn't deceive you if I never saw him again. And besides, I hoped you would think of some way!"

"And you escape quite unpunished?" said Miss Wing gently.

At which the black head sank lower, while a smothered voice mumbled: "Do you think I—*liked* it, coming to tell?"

Miss Wing smoothed her hair. "It would have

STORIES THAT END WELL

pained me very much if you had not come. Tell me; whether he sees you or not, will he not write to your father? Do you think his feeling is so slight that a disappointment will turn it?"

The black head threw itself up bravely and the fearless young eyes met Miss Wing's pensive brown ones. "No, Miss Wing, I know it will make no difference."

Miss Wing stifled a sigh; it may be that she was not so sure of the firm purpose of a lover; she spoke more gently: "It is only the disappointment, then, if you can't see him?"

The girl's face quivered a little.

"Perhaps I am foolish," said Miss Wing, "but I think it *would* be a disappointment very hard to bear. Still, you must admit that parents do not send their children to school expecting them to become engaged to be married; on the contrary, there is a tacit pledge that we shall protect our wards from any entanglement. But this did not happen at school; the only question is, ought I to prevent it going any farther? My dear, do you have confidence in me?"

"Yes, Miss Wing," said the girl.

MAX—OR HIS PICTURE

"Of course, I do not think that I ought to consent to your driving alone together."

The girl drew a long sigh. "I suppose not," she breathed, in dismal resignation.

"But I should like him to some here, to see me; and then, if I find him to be what your father would approve, you may see him here; and we shall all have to explain things together, I fancy, to your father."

The girl drew another, a very different, sigh, and impulsively kissed Miss Wing's hand. She tried to speak, and could only murmur, "Oh, I do love you!"

"And so, if you will tell Graf von Butler—what is his Christian name, Florence?"

"Max," said the girl, very low, for she felt the presence of the picture, on which she had not once turned her eyes. Before she spoke, under a pretense of a pull at her skirt, she slipped her hand out of the hand with the sapphire ring. Yet her excited young nerves vibrated at the slight cough which came as the principal changed her position, before she said, in her usual tone: "It is a fine name. Well, Florence, you will tell Count Max von Butler that I shall hope to see him. And—will you trust me?"

The girl told her that she would trust her utterly,

STORIES THAT END WELL

and she knew that it would be right ; and oh, she was so happy. And she came back to say, with the tears in her eyes, "I shall be grateful to you as long as I live."

Miss Wing stood in the center of the room, smiling, until the door closed. But then in a second she was at the door, almost fiercely, but noiselessly, twisting the key in the lock. From the door she passed to the windows and dropped the shades. At last, safe from every chance of espial, she sat down again in her chair before the desk, leaned her elbows on the desk, and looked desperately, miserably, into the joyous face of the picture. She did not speak, but her thoughts took on words and sank like hot lead into her heart. "Max Butler! Max Butler! The little nephew he told me about. And *he* has been alive all these years ; and happy ; with little sons, while I—I have lied to these trusting girls. It was wicked and shameless. I deceived myself ; then I deceived them. I wonder why. I knew what they were thinking. How dared I look that honest child in the face ! I suppose she wonders like the rest why I have not told any one of my romance. And it is simply that there was nothing to tell. Nothing."

MAX—OR HIS PICTURE

She looked into the soldier's happy eyes while her lips curled and she murmured, drearily and bitterly, "I haven't even the right to be angry with you, poor lad. What did you do? *You* are not my Max; I only made him up out of my heart—like children playing a game!" Her mind drifted dizzily through shapeless and inconsequent visions of the past. She was seeing again the grim pile of the ruined castle, the masses of broken shadow, the intricate carving on arch and architrave and plinth, the wavering mass of limbs and tree-trunks on the green sward; and she, with her twisted ankle, was kneeling, trying to peer through the shrubbery for her lost companions. Did he come by chance? She had seen the handsome young officer daily, for a week. His great-aunt was Margaret's right-hand neighbor at the pension table d'hôte, a withered relic of Polish nobility with fine, black eyes in a face like a hickory nut; who wore shabby gowns and magnificent jewels, frankly smoked cigarettes, and seemed to have a venomous tale ready to fit any name mentioned in conversation—with one exception, her nephew's. According to her, Max's father was a swine and his mother a fool and his brother a popinjay, and his

STORIES THAT END WELL

sister had no respect for her betters; but Max had a heart. It was understood at the pension that she was arranging a great match for him. In spite of the general disapproval of his aunt, he was a favorite, he was so simple, amiable, and polite. Even the American professor admitted that for a man "who had won the iron cross in such a spectacular fashion, he was very modest and really more like an American than a German officer," thus paying the unconsciously arrogant compliment kept by every race for engaging aliens. Margaret's first sight of him was not under the shelter of conventionalities. It happened that the countess' ferocious pet (and the terror of the pension), a Great Dane, was trying to eat up a little girl, but fortunately had begun with her petticoats. The court of the house was the scene of the fray; a large, timid cook, the only witness, was waving a copper kettle full of the meringue that she was beating, in one hand, and the great wire whip in the other, while she shrieked impartially on Heaven and the police. Margaret heard the din. She ran to the spot. Being a New England woman, she didn't scream; one swift glance went from the child's writhing body and the dog's horrible head to

MAX—OR HIS PICTURE

the wailing cook. In two strides she caught the kettle out of a fat and agitated German hand and hurled the whole sticky, white mass full at the dog's eyes; then, as the blinded and astounded beast flung his head back to howl, and spattered the world with meringue, she snatched up the child and sent her flying into the door and the cook. The dog was smeared with meringue, she was smeared, the child was smeared, the cook was smeared; and now a beautiful white and gold officer, who bounded over the wall and fell upon the dog with his saber and two heels, was smeared the most lavishly of all! No wonder Frau Müller (visible aloft, in an artless German toilet of ease and without her teeth), the countess (who was a gazing stock, for the same reason), and Augustine, her maid, the three Russians on the second floor, and the three Americans on the third, filled the windows with polyglot consternation! The consequence of it all was that when the Count von Butler was formally presented to Miss Wing that evening, she blushed. She was too pale and listless to be pretty, but when she blushed she was enchanting. Remembering the meringue, she smiled and ventured an upward

STORIES THAT END WELL

glance; and, for the first time in her life, met the admiration in the eyes of a man. At this time Margaret was thirty years old and had never been asked in marriage. She had spent most of the thirty years in a boarding-school, as pupil or as teacher; and she had brought from her cloistered life a single vivid feeling, a passionate friendship which death had ended. The sapphire ring was her poor friend's last token.

To be thirty and never to have been sought like other girls, leaves a chill in the heart. It may be lonely never to have loved, but it is bleak never to have been loved. Margaret remembered her delicate, girlish dreams with a recoil of humiliation; they seemed to her almost immodest. She thought she was too old to wear hats, and wondered whether she ought not to discard the pinks and light blues which poor Elly had liked on her, for more sedate colors. But she wore pink after she met Max Butler. Yet he never saw her save in the presence of others. He was full of little, graceful attentions, but he showed the same attentions to the portly clergyman's widow and the meritorious but cross-eyed teacher of fifty, who formed Miss Wing's "party"; it was only his

MAX—OR HIS PICTURE

eyes, his eyes always following her, approvingly, delighting, admiring, pleading, speaking to her as they spoke to no other woman. She told herself that it was just the pleasant, foreign way; and she wrote to her friends in America, "The German officers have very agreeable, deferential manners; I think they are much more gentle and polite and have a higher respect for women than the French or Italians." And he said no word, even of friendship, until that afternoon at the Heidelberger Schloss.

He came upon her almost immediately, scrambling up the bank at a rate which had worked woe to his uniform. He was torn, he was scratched, he was stained with mud and grass; and he was beaming with delight. "I have seen you from below," he exclaimed in his careful English, "so I came up. Will you excuse?" Then his mood changed, perceiving her plight, and he insisted on tearing his handkerchief into strips to bind her ankle. It seemed absurd to refuse his aid, which he offered quite simply; but his hands trembled a little over the knots. "It will be most easy, I think," said he, "that you should let me assist you a small way, to the *restau-*

STORIES THAT END WELL

racion; so I can get the carriage, and you can have some ice cream. Again, to-day, is it burned—”

She had laughed and said that she never had heard of burned ice cream. He laughed, too, and explained that it was burned as a custard, and somehow under cover of this she let him put her hand on his shoulder and his arm about her waist. She was grateful to him for the matter-of-fact manner in which he did it all, saying, “You will have to be my comrade that has been wounded, and I will help him off the field; so I did, once, with my colonel; it is better than to wait until I could bring help.” In this fashion they walked for some twenty minutes. They were minutes not entirely disfigured by her physical pain, for it was a comfort to be helped by so strong and kind a friend. The comfort brightened almost into pleasure, as they drove homeward in a shabby *droschky*, with all the circuit of the horizon flooded with softest rose and gold, reflecting the cloudless glory of the west. Borne along through that unreal and lovely radiance, past the hills checkered with vineyards and ripening grain, which the sunlight blazoned in green and gold like the initials of an old missal; they talked as one friend would talk to

MAX—OR HIS PICTURE

another. At least that was her phrase, and she admitted to herself that she had not been so nearly happy since Elly died. "I didn't know a man could be so—so kind," she said.

He told her of his country and his home; and how he loved the hills that his fathers had always owned, and the rugged, simple, faithful people; he told her of the plans of his father and himself for them; he told her of his father, who had the best heart in the world, but was credited with a fierce temper simply because his voice was loud; and his mother, who was so gentle that every one loved her; and his handsome sister, and his brother, who was a diplomat and far cleverer than he; and his little brother who died and would have no one carry him in his pain but Max ("Ah, he was the most clever and the most beautiful of us all!"), and Max, his little nephew, who looked like the dead boy. "I hope you will see my home and them all," he said; "to-morrow, I shall see them, then, the same day, I shall be back here—with you."

And then, by degrees, she won him to talk of his profession, of his hopes, his ambitions, his ideals; of all those intimate and cherished things which lie at the bottom of the soul and only rise for a friend's

STORIES THAT END WELL

eyes. It seemed to her that she could read his character in the hints given by his words, as one would fill an outline sketch with perspective and details. There was certainly a fascination in this revelation; candor, after all, was a virtue, as well as reticence. Perhaps her new friend was a little mediæval, but he was as refined as if he had been all modern.

By now they were rattling through the modern town of Heidelberg, the plain walls of which looked bare after the lawless pomp of carving and form on the old castle; they had not even the bizarre, affected grace of the architecture then decking American countrysides. But Margaret thought how homelike and honest the houses looked; staunch and trusty, like the German. Butler, just then, was praising American buggies, from which he made a general transition to the customs of society. "In America, is it not," says he, "the young ladies drive alone with young men?"

"Yes, very often. But not with you?"

"Oh, no, *mein fraulein*, this is the first time I am alone with a young lady!"

She had called herself old for so long that there was a distinct pleasure in being "a young lady" to

MAX—OR HIS PICTURE

him, and she had not time to remember it partook of the nature of deceit, because he sent a wave of confusion over her by continuing: "In America, also, one would propose marriage to a lady, herself, before to her father?"

"It is our custom," agreed Margaret, "but"—with her prim teacher's air—"your custom is far more decorous."

His face fell, then promptly brightened. "Perhaps it would be best to speak to both, so near the same time one can. But this is another thing you must explain me. How is it most preferable to the lady, that one shall write or shall come—"

"Oh, write," said Margaret quickly. How silly of her to suddenly feel so frightened; she wished that she were in a room and not in a carriage with him; involuntarily she shrank back into her own corner, and she found that she was playing with the soiled and frayed edges of a tear in the cloth of the side-curtain and watching her pearl-colored fingers. Those gloves she had put on new, that day. How reckless! But she had not the resolution to desist. His voice dragged a little, "Ah, yes, if she would refuse, but if—not?"

STORIES THAT END WELL

"In any case," said she.

"Look!" he exclaimed, "at the sunset. Ah, is it not lovely?"

Of a sudden they were looking, not at the sunset, but into each other's eyes; and all about them was that wonderful, transfiguring glow, and it seemed as if there were nothing in the whole world that he had not said.

"Is it to the right, Herr Captain?" asked the driver, turning on his seat to divide a benign and semi-intoxicated smile between them.

Then it was hardly a moment until the yellow stucco of the pension jumped at their eyes, around a corner; and there were the clergyman's widow and the teacher at the door. They fell upon the carriage in a clamor of explanation and sympathy; they were at her side when he bowed over her hand and kissed it, saying, "*Aufwiedersehen.*"

That was all. There was never any more. He did not come again. Or if he came, she was not there, since the next day they were on their way to Bremen, summoned by cable to her sister's deathbed. She never heard from him or of him again. Yet she had left her American address with his aunt for any

MAX—OR HIS PICTURE

letters that might need to be forwarded, and a stiff little note of thanks and farewell—a perfectly neutral note such as any friend might give or receive. There followed weeks crowded with sorrow and business (the sister was a widow without children, and she shared her estate with her other sister); and Margaret imputed her deep depression to these natural and sufficient causes. She rated herself for vanity in reading her own meanings into a courteous young man's looks and his intelligent interest in national difference of manners. She fostered her shame with the New Englander's zest for self-torture. But one afternoon, without warning, there fell upon her a deep and hopeless peace. It was as if some invisible power controlled and changed all the currents of her thought. She *knew* that her friend was not faithless or careless; he was dead. She began to weep gently, thinking pitifully of his old father with the loud voice, and his fragile mother and the sister and brother and the little nephew. "Poor people," she murmured, wishing, for the first time in her life, to make some sign of her sorrow for them to them, she who always paid her toll of sympathy, but dreaded it and knew that she was

STORIES THAT END WELL

clumsy. She remembered the day at the castle, and went over again each word, each look. A sensation that she could not understand, full of awe and sweet-ness, possessed her. It was indescribable, unthink-able, but it was also irresistible. Under its impulse she went to a trunk in another room, from which she had not yet removed all the contents, and took out her Heidelberg photographs. She said to her-self that she would look at the scenes of that day. In her search she came upon a package of her own pictures which had come the morning of the day that she had gone. She could not remember any details of receiving them, except that she had been at the photographer's the day before and paid for them. When they came she was in too great agita-tion (they were just packing) to more than fling them into a tray. She could not tell why she took the *cartes* out of the envelope and ran them listlessly through her fingers; but at the last of the package she uttered a cry. The last *carte* was a picture of Max, with the inscription in his own hand, "Thine for ever." It is not exact to say that with the find-ing of the picture her doubt of his affection for her vanished; for in truth, she had no doubts, the pos-

MAX—OR HIS PICTURE

session was too absolute. But the sight came upon her as the presence of a mortal being, alive and visible, comes on one when he enters a room. And there is no question that it was a comfort; if she had really loved Max, at this time, the knowledge of his death would have been her cruellest shock; for then she could have no hope to meet him again in the world—no hope of some explanation and the happiness of life together. But she was not in love with the young German, she was touched by his admiration, she admired him tenderly, she felt the moving of a subtle attraction which she called friendship and which might pass into a keener feeling; but she did not love him. Not then. Therefore, she felt a sweetness in her pain; she could respect herself once more; she had a new and mystical joy; for was she not beloved above women? Had not her lover come to her, through what strange paths who may know, to comfort her? This is the story of the picture. She could not tell it. Nor did she; but she hung Max's portrait on the walls of her little parlor; and she hung opposite a picture of the castle; and from that day, never a day passed that it did not influence her. She used to think her thoughts be-

STORIES THAT END WELL

fore it. She came to it with her grief for the loss of kindred and friends, with her loneliness, with her anxieties, with her aspirations, her plans, her cares for others, her slowly dawning interests and affections. She was a reticent woman, who might never have allowed her heart to expand to her husband himself, beyond a certain limit; but she hid nothing from Max. In time, she fell into the habit of talking to the picture. She called him Max. The first time she spoke his name she blushed. She made her toilets for him more than for the world; but whether Max could admire them or not, it is certain that the girls knew every change in her pretty gowns. Her sense of having been loved had its effect on her manner, and a deeper effect on her heart. At thirty she was a New England nun; at forty she was the woman who understands. The love which the shrinking and critical girl repelled at its first step toward her, without knowing, the woman who pitied and who understood, attracted, quite as unconsciously.

"It is very queer, Max," she said, "that in my old age men should want to marry me. But I like you best."

MAX—OR HIS PICTURE

Only the day before, she had said that; and she had said, "I am happy, Max. Isn't it strange! But I am." Only yesterday—and now there was nothing. The Max that she had grown to love, with the gradual, imperceptible advance of affection, sweet to her shy nature—that Max had never been. No doubt all the while, over in Germany, a stout and phlegmatic German landlord had been caring for his vineyards and playing the war lord in the landwehr and living very comfortably with the dough-faced German girl whose hair was lighter than her complexion, whom the countess wanted him to marry; a man as unlike the high-souled knight of her fancy as—as she, herself, was unlike the girl's image! Worst of all was her own weak, false behavior. "No," she cried, in an access of bitterness, "the worst is that I can't feel *that* the worst; I can only feel I have lost him, for ever! I don't seem to mind that I have lost myself!"

Now she began to pace the room, trying to think clearly. Was it her duty to tell Florence the story and let her tell the girls? The red-hot agony of the idea seemed to her excited conscience an intimation that it *was* her duty from which she shrank because

STORIES THAT END WELL

she was a selfish, hysterical, dishonorable coward. Horrible as such abasement would be, if it were her duty, she could do it; what she could not, what she *would* not do, was to tear the veil from that pure and mystical passion which had been the flower of her heart. "Not if it cost me my soul," she said, with the frozen quiet of despair; "it is awful, but I can't do it!" One thing did remain; she could remove the picture. That false witness of what had never been should go. No eyes should ever fall on it again. It should never deceive more. She walked toward it firmly. She lifted her hand—and it fell. "I can't!" she moaned. "I'll do it to-morrow." She could not remember, in years, so weak a compromise offered her conscience.

But she felt a sense of respite, almost relief, once having decided, and she recovered her composure enough to go to her chamber and bathe her eyes. While she was thus engaged she heard a knock. "It is he," she said quietly; "well, the sooner the better."

It was he; he had come earlier than he expected, he explained; he was most grateful for Miss Wing's kind message. He looked like his uncle, as the members of a family will look alike. He was not

MAX—OR HIS PICTURE

so tall; he was not so handsome. Perhaps most people would call him more graceful. And his English was faultless; he must have spoken it from his childhood. In the midst of his first sentences, before they had permitted him to take a chair, his eyes traveled past Miss Wing's face. She perceived that he saw the picture; she knew that she grew pale; but, to her amazement, a calm like the calm which had wrapped her senses on the day of her finding the picture, closed about her again. "I beg pardon?" said he.

"Yes, that is Count von Butler's portrait," said she, in a clear voice, without emotion. He was not so composed. "Then it *was* you," he said. Following her example, he took a chair and looked earnestly at the pictured face. "When Miss Raimund spoke of you so warmly, I noticed that the name was the same, and I determined to inquire, but it seemed to me unlikely. Yet it is. Miss Wing, I have a message to you, from my uncle."

She noticed that there were gold motes in the air; and his pleasant, blond face seemed to wander through them; the room was full of sunlight.

"I was with him when he died."

That was a strange thing to hear when the mes-

STORIES THAT END WELL

sage of his uncle's death had come to him in another country; she hoped that her brain was not going to play her false.

"It was fifteen years ago last July, you know. I never knew how many details you received, or only the bare fact in the papers."

Fifteen years! fifteen years! What was that date he was giving? That was the day on which she sailed for America, the day after—what was that story he was telling of a visit and a fire and a child rescued and an accident? But still she listened with the same iron composure. The next words she heard distinctly.

"It was like him to lose his life that way; and he did not grudge it. Yet it was hard that I should be the only one of his blood with him. He could speak with difficulty when he told me to take a lock of hair and his signet ring to you. He dictated the address, himself, to me. 'You must be sure and take it,' he said. 'It is to the lady that I hoped would be my betrothed; you must tell grandmamma about it, too. She has my picture and she knows—but tell her'—and then, I think his mind must have wandered a little, for he smiled brightly at me, saying, '*I'll tell*

MAX—OR HIS PICTURE

her, myself,' and then the doctors came. He said nothing more, only once, they told me, he murmured something about his betrothed. But I had the ring; he took it off his finger and kissed it and gave it to me. Child as I was, I knew that it was sacred. I wrapped it in the paper, and afterward I put the lock of hair beside it. So soon as I could, I went to Heidelberg, to the pension. You had gone and there was no address, no trace—”

“I left my address with the countess—”

“My aunt is dead,” said the young German gravely. “I would not criticize her, but she had her own choice of a wife for my uncle; I do not think one could trust her with addresses.”

“We all gave ours to her to give to Frau Müller.”

“That is why, then, I could not find you. My grandmother also tried. But you were gone. I thought of the banks, long after, but I found nothing. Often it has seemed dreadful that you should learn of this only through the papers. But I could not tell whether—*anything*. When I came to America, I confess it was always in my mind. I always carried my uncle's little packet with me. I will have it sent to you.”

STORIES THAT END WELL

"Excuse me," said Miss Wing gently. "Will you please bring me the glass of water—I—am afraid—I can't walk to it."

But she would not let him pour the water on his handkerchief to bathe her head. She sipped the water, and very pale, but quite herself, brought him back to his own matters. She found that it was a cousin, miscalled an uncle, in the German manner, who had died. It did not seem to her that Max's nephew could be unworthy of any girl; yet she conscientiously questioned him regarding his worldly affairs, for Florence was an only daughter whose father had great possessions and a distrust of adventurers, and at last she sent him forth to walk in the grove with his sweetheart. "And speak to her," she said, with a look that sank into his heart; "it is the American way; don't wait to write, the American way is best."

So, at last, she was alone. Alone with her lover who had always been true; whose love many waters could not quench, and it was stronger than death. She often pondered, afterward, whether there had not been some note written to her and sent with the photographs; whether the countess might not have

MAX—OR HIS PICTURE

tampered with the package, taking the note, but not suspecting the picture. But none of these puzzles troubled her to-day. She stood in front of the picture. All the years, an obscure and virginal shyness had withheld her from ever overstepping her first attitude. She told him every thought of her heart in regard to others and herself. He was her dearest friend. She called him "Max" and "my friend." Recalling the French use of the latter term, she used it sometimes with a little flutter of the heart. But those innocent endearments that a woman keeps for her lover's portrait—to make amends for not proferring them of free will to the poor fellow himself—these it would have shocked her to imagine. She never touched the picture, save reverently to dust it, to take it down when she went away, to replace it in its station when she returned. But now, trembling, yet not blushing, she took the picture into her hands. She looked long into its eyes; she kissed it with a light and timid kiss, and swiftly hid the smiling face against her heart, pressing the frame in both hands, and touching it with her cheek bent over it, while she whispered: "You *did* tell me. You came back and told me. I love you. Max, my knight—my husband!"

THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS' BICYCLE

THERE was a skeleton in Mrs. Margaret Ellis' closet; the same skeleton abode also in the closet of Miss Lorania Hopkins.

The skeleton—which really does not seem a proper word—was the dread of growing stout. They were more afraid of flesh than of sin. Yet they were both good women. Mrs. Ellis regularly attended church, and could always be depended on to show hospitality to convention delegates, whether clerical or lay; she was a liberal subscriber to every good work; she was almost the only woman in the church aid society that never lost her temper at the soul-vexing time of the church fair; and she had a larger clientele of regular pensioners than any one in town, unless it were her friend, Miss Hopkins, who was “so good to the poor” that never a tramp slighted her kitchen. Miss Hopkins was as amiable as Mrs. Ellis, and always put her name under that

THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS' BICYCLE

of Mrs. Ellis, with exactly the same amount, on the subscription papers. She could have given more, for she had the larger income; but she had no desire to outshine her friend, whom she admired as the most charming of women.

Mrs. Ellis, indeed, was agreeable as well as good, and a pretty woman to the bargain, if she did not choose to be weighed before people. Miss Hopkins often told her that she was not really stout; she merely was a plump, trig little figure. Miss Hopkins, alas! was really stout. The two waged a warfare against the flesh equal to the apostle's in vigor, although so much less deserving of praise.

Mrs. Ellis drove her cook to distraction with divers dieting systems, from Banting's and Doctor Salisbury's to the latest exhortations of some unknown newspaper prophet. She bought elaborate gymnastic appliances, and swung dumbbells and rode imaginary horses and propelled imaginary boats. She ran races with a professional trainer, and she studied the principles of Delsarte, and solemnly whirled on one foot and swayed her body and rolled her head and hopped and kicked and genuflected in company with eleven other stout and ear-

STORIES THAT END WELL

nest matrons and one slim and giggling girl who almost choked at every lesson. In all these exercises Miss Hopkins faithfully kept her company, which was the easier, as Miss Hopkins lived in the next house, a conscientious Colonial mansion with all the modern conveniences hidden beneath the old-fashioned pomp.

And yet, despite these struggles and self-denials, it must be told that Margaret Ellis and Lorania Hopkins were little thinner for their warfare. Still, as Shuey Cardigan, the trainer, told Mrs. Ellis, there was no knowing what they might have weighed had they not struggled.

"It ain't only the fat that's *on ye, moind ye,*" says Shuey, with a confidential sympathy of mien; "it's what *ye'd* naturally be getting in addition. And first *ye've* got to peel off that, and then *ye* come down to the other."

Shuey was so much the most successful of Mrs. Ellis' reducers that his words were weighty. And when at last Shuey said, "I got what you need," Mrs. Ellis listened. "You need a bike, no less," says Shuey.

"But I never could ride one!" said Margaret,

THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS' BICYCLE

opening her pretty brown eyes and wrinkling her Grecian forehead.

"You'd ride in six lessons," pronounced Shuey.

"But how would I *look*, Cardigan?"

"You'd look noble, ma'am!"

"What do you consider the best wheel, Cardigan?"

Fear of being accused of advertising prevents my giving Cardigan's answer; it is enough that the wheel glittered at Mrs. Ellis' door the very next day, and that a large pasteboard box was delivered by the expressman the very next week. He went on to Miss Hopkins', and delivered the twin of the box, with a similar yellow printed card bearing the impress of the same great firm on the inside of the box cover. For Margaret had hied her to Lorania Hopkins the instant Shuey was gone. She presented herself breathless, a little to the embarrassment of Lorania, who was sitting with her niece before a large box of cracker-jack.

"It's a new kind of candy; I was just *tasting* it, Maggie," faltered she, while the niece, a girl of nineteen, with the inhuman spirits of her age, laughed aloud.

STORIES THAT END WELL

"You needn't mind me," said Mrs. Ellis cheerfully; "I'm eating potatoes now!"

"Oh, Maggie!" Miss Hopkins breathed the words between envy and disapproval.

Mrs. Ellis tossed her brown head airily, not a whit abashed. "And I had beer for luncheon, and I'm going to have champagne for dinner."

"Maggie, how do you dare? Did they—did they taste good?"

"They tasted *heavenly*, Lorania. Pass me the candy. I am going to try something new—the thinnest thing there is. I read in the paper of one woman who lost forty pounds in three months, and is losing still!"

"If it is obesity pills, I—"

"It isn't; it's a bicycle. Lorania, you and I must ride! Sibyl Hopkins, you heartless child, what are you laughing at?"

Lorania rose; in the glass over the mantel her figure returned her gaze. There was no mistake (except that, as is often the case with stout people, *that* glass always increased her size), she was a stout lady. She was taller than the average of women, and well proportioned, and still light on her feet;

THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS' BICYCLE

but she could not blink away the records; she was heavy on the scales. Did she stand looking at herself squarely, her form was shapely enough, although larger than she could wish; but the full force of the revelation fell when she allowed herself a profile view, she having what is called "a round waist," and being almost as large one way as another. Yet Lorania was only thirty-three years old, and was of no mind to retire from society, and have a special phaeton built for her use, and hear from her mother's friends how much her mother weighed before her death.

"How should *I* look on a wheel?" she asked, even as Mrs. Ellis had asked before; and Mrs. Ellis stoutly answered, "You'd look *noble!*"

"Shuey will teach us," she went on, "and we can have a track made in your pasture, where nobody can see us learning. Lorania, there's nothing like it. Let me bring you the bicycle edition of *Harper's Bazar.*"

Miss Hopkins capitulated at once, and sat down to order her costume, while Sibyl, the niece, revelled silently in visions of a new bicycle which should presently revert to her. "For it's ridiculous, auntie's

STORIES THAT END WELL

thinking of riding!" Miss Sibyl considered. "She would be a figure of fun on a wheel; besides, she can never learn in this world!"

Yet Sibyl was attached to her aunt, and enjoyed visiting Hopkins Manor, as Lorania had named her new house, into which she moved on the same day that she joined the Colonial Dames, by right of her ancestor the great and good divine commemorated by Mrs. Stowe. Lorania's friends were all fond of her, she was so good-natured and tolerant, with a touch of dry humor in her vision of things, and not the least a Puritan in her frank enjoyment of ease and luxury. Nevertheless, Lorania had a good, able-bodied New England conscience, capable of staying awake nights without flinching; and perhaps from her stanch old Puritan forefathers she inherited her simple integrity, so that she neither lied nor cheated—even in the small whitewashed manner of her sex—and valued loyalty above most of the virtues. She had an innocent pride in her godly and martial ancestry, which was quite on the surface, and led people who did not know her to consider her haughty.

For fifteen years she had been an orphan, the

THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS' BICYCLE

mistress of a very large estate. No doubt she had been sought often in marriage, but never until lately had Lorania seriously thought of marrying. Sibyl said that she was too unsentimental to marry. Really she was too romantic. She had a longing to be loved, not in the quiet, matter-of-fact manner of her suitors, but with the passion of the poets. Therefore the presence of another skeleton in Mrs. Ellis' closet, because she knew about a certain handsome Italian marquis who at this period was conducting an impassioned wooing by mail. Margaret did not fancy the marquis. He was not an American. He would take Lorania away. She thought his very virtue florid, and suspected that he had learned his love-making in a bad school. She dropped dark hints that frightened Lorania, who would sometimes piteously demand, "Don't you think he *could* care for me—for—for myself?" Margaret knew that she had an overweening distrust of her own appearance. How many tears she had shed first and last over her unhappy plumpness it would be hard to reckon. She made no account of her satin skin, or her glossy black hair, or her lustrous violet eyes with their long black lashes, or her flashing white

STORIES THAT END WELL

teeth; she glanced dismally at her shape and scornfully at her features, good, honest, irregular American features, that might not satisfy a Greek critic, but suited each other and pleased her countrymen. And then she would sigh heavily over her figure. Her friend had not the heart to impute the marquis' beautiful, artless compliments to mercenary motives. After all, the Italian was a good fellow, according to the point of view of his own race, if he did intend to live on his wife's money, and had a very varied assortment of memories of women.

But Margaret dreaded and disliked him all the more for his good qualities. To-day this secret apprehension flung a cloud over the bicycle enthusiasm. She could not help wondering whether at this moment Lorania was not thinking of the marquis, who rode a wheel and a horse admirably.

"Aunt Lorania," said Sibyl, "there comes Mr. Winslow. Shall I run out and ask him about those cloth-of-gold roses? The aphides are eating them all up."

"Yes, to be sure, dear; but don't let Ferguson suspect what you are talking of; he might feel hurt."

Ferguson was the gardener. Miss Hopkins left

THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS' BICYCLE

her note to go to the window. Below she saw a mettled horse, with tossing head and silken skin, restlessly fretting on his bit and pawing the dust in front of the fence, while his rider, hat in hand, talked with the young girl. He was a little man, a very little man, in a gray business suit of the best cut and material. An air of careful and dainty neatness was diffused about both horse and rider. He bent toward Miss Sibyl's charming person a thin, alert, fair face. His head was finely shaped, the brown hair worn away a little on the temples. He smiled gravely at intervals; the smile told that he had a dimple in his cheek.

"I wonder," said Mrs. Ellis, "whether Mr. Winslow can have a penchant for Sibyl?"

Lorania opened her eyes. At this moment Mr. Winslow had caught sight of her at the window, and he bowed almost to his saddle-bow; Sibyl was saying something at which she laughed, and he visibly reddened. It was a peculiarity of his that his color turned easily. In a second his hat was on his head and his horse bounded half across the road.

"Hardly, I think," said Lorania. "How well he rides! I never knew any one ride better—in this country."

STORIES THAT END WELL

"I suppose Sibyl would ridicule such a thing," said Mrs. Ellis, continuing her own train of thought, and yet vaguely disturbed by the last sentence.

"Why should she?"

"Well, he is so little, for one thing, and she is so tall. And then Sibyl thinks a great deal of social position."

"He is a Winslow," said Lorania, arching her neck unconsciously—"a lineal descendant from Kenelm Winslow, who came over in the *May*—"

"But his mother—"

"I don't know anything about his mother before she came here. Oh, of course I know the gossip that she was a niece of the overseer at a village poorhouse, and that her husband quarrelled with all his family and married her in the poorhouse, and I know that when he died here she would not take a cent from the Winslows, nor let them have the boy. She is the meekest-looking little woman, but she must have an iron streak in her somewhere, for she was left without enough money to pay the funeral expenses, and she educated the boy and accumulated enough money to pay for this place they have.

"She used to run a laundry, and made money;

THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS' BICYCLE

but when Cyril got a place in the bank she sold out the laundry and went into chickens and vegetables; she told somebody that it wasn't so profitable as the laundry, but it was more genteel, and Cyril being now in a position of trust at the bank, she must consider *him*. Cyril swept out the bank. People laughed about it, but, do you know, I rather liked Mrs. Winslow for it. She isn't in the least an assertive woman. How long have we been up here, Maggie? Isn't it four years? And they have been our next-door neighbors, and she has never been inside the house. Nor he either, for that matter, except once when it took fire, you know, and he came in with that funny little chemical engine tucked under his arm, and took off his hat in the same prim, polite way that he takes it off when he talks to Sibyl, and said, 'If you'll excuse me offering advice, Miss Hopkins, it is not necessary to move anything; it mars furniture very much to move it at a fire. I think, if you will allow me, I can extinguish this.' And he did, too, didn't he, as neatly and as coolly as if it were only adding up a column of figures. And offered me the engine as a souvenir of the occasion afterward."

STORIES THAT END WELL

"Lorania, you never told me that!"

"It seemed like making fun of him, when he had been so kind. I declined as civilly as I could. I hope I didn't hurt his feelings. I meant to pay a visit to his mother and ask them to dinner, but you know I went to England that week, and somehow when I came back it was difficult. It seems a little odd we never have seen more of the Winslows, but I fancy they don't want either to intrude or to be intruded on. But he is certainly very obliging about the garden. Think of all the slips and flowers he has given us, and the advice—"

"All passed over the fence. It is funny our neighborly good offices which we render at arm's-length. How long have you known him?"

"Oh, a long time. He is cashier of my bank, you know. First he was teller, then assistant cashier, and now for five years he has been cashier. The president wants to resign and let him be president, but he hardly has enough stock for that. But Oliver says" (Oliver was Miss Hopkins' brother) "that there isn't a shrewder or straighter banker in the state. Oliver likes him. He says he is a sandy little fellow."

THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS' BICYCLE

"Well, he is," assented Mrs. Ellis. "It isn't many cashiers would let robbers stab them and shoot them and leave them for dead rather than give up the combination of the safe!"

"He wouldn't take a cent for it, either, and he saved ever so many thousand dollars. Yes, he *is* brave. I went to the same school with him once, and saw him fight a big boy twice his size—such a nasty boy, who called me 'Fatty,' and made a kissing noise with his lips just to scare me—and poor little Cyril Winslow got awfully beaten, and when I saw him on the ground, with his nose bleeding and that big brute pounding him, I ran to the water-bucket, and poured the whole bucket on that big bullying boy and stopped the fight, just as the teacher got on the scene. I cried over little Cyril Winslow. He was crying himself. 'I ain't crying because he hurt me,' he sobbed; 'I'm crying because I'm so mad I didn't lick him!' I wonder if he remembers that episode?"

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Ellis.

"Maggie, what makes you think he is falling in love with Sibyl?"

Mrs. Ellis laughed. "I dare say he *isn't* in love

STORIES THAT END WELL

with Sibyl," said she. "I think the main reason was his always riding by here instead of taking the shorter road down the other street."

"Does he always ride by here? I hadn't noticed."

"Always!" said Mrs. Ellis. "I had noticed."

"I am sorry for him," said Lorania, musingly. "I think Sibyl is very much taken with that young Captain Carr at the Arsenal. Young girls always affect the army. He is a nice fellow, but I don't think he is the man Winslow is. Now, Maggie, advise me about the suit. I don't want to look like the escaped fat lady of a museum."

Lorania thought no more of Sibyl's love affairs. If she thought of the Winslows, it was to wish that Mrs. Winslow would sell or rent her pasture, which, in addition to her own and Mrs. Ellis' pastures thrown into one, would make such a delightful bicycle track.

The Winslow house was very different from the two villas that were the pride of Fairport. A little story and a half cottage peeped out on the road behind the tall maples that were planted when Winslow was a boy. But there was a wonderful green velvet lawn, and the tulips and sweet peas and pan-

THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS' BICYCLE

sies that blazed softly nearer the house were as beautiful as those over which Miss Lorania's gardener toiled and worried.

Mrs. Winslow was a little woman who showed the fierce struggle of her early life only in the deeper lines between her delicate eyebrows and the expression of melancholy patience in her brown eyes.

She always wore a widow's cap and a black gown. In the mornings she donned a blue figured apron of stout and serviceable stuff; in the afternoon, an apron of that sheer white lawn used by bishops and smart young waitresses. Of an afternoon, in warm weather, she was accustomed to sit on the eastern piazza, next to the Hopkins place, and rock as she sewed. She was thus sitting and sewing when she beheld an extraordinary procession cross the Hopkins lawn. First marched the tall trainer, Shuey Cardigan, who worked by day in the Lossing furniture factory, and gave bicycle lessons at the armory evenings. He was clad in a white sweater and buff leggings, and was wheeling a lady's bicycle. Behind him walked Miss Hopkins in a gray suit, the skirt of which only came to her ankles—she, always so dignified in her toilets.

STORIES THAT END WELL

"Land's sakes!" gasped Mrs. Winslow, "if she ain't going to ride a bike! Well, what next?"

What really happened next was the sneaking (for no other word does justice to the cautious and circuitous movements of her) of Mrs. Winslow to the stable, which had one window facing the Hopkins pasture. No cows were grazing in the pasture. All around the grassy plateau twinkled a broad brownish-yellow track. At one side of this track a bench had been placed, and a table, pleasing to the eye, with jugs and glasses. Mrs. Ellis, in a suit of the same undignified brevity and ease as Miss Hopkins', sat on the bench supporting her own wheel. Shuey Cardigan was drawn up to his full six feet of strength, and, one arm in the air, was explaining the theory of the balance of power. It was an uncanny moment to Lorania. She eyed the glistening, restless thing that slipped beneath her hand, and her fingers trembled. If she could have fled in secret she would. But since flight was not possible, she assumed a firm expression. Mrs. Ellis wore a smile of studied and sickly cheerfulness.

"Don't you think it is very *high?*" said Lorania.
"I can *never* get up on it!"

THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS' BICYCLE

"It will be by the block at first," said Shuey, in the soothing tones of a jockey to a nervous horse; "it's easy by the block. And I'll be steadyng it, of course."

"Don't they have any with larger saddles? It is a *very* small saddle."

"They're all of a size. It wouldn't look sporty larger; it would look like a special make. Yous wouldn't want a special make."

Lorania thought that she would be thankful for a special make, but she suppressed the unsportsmanlike thought. "The pedals are very small, too, Cardigan. Are you *sure* they can hold me?"

"They could hold two of ye, Miss Hopkins. Now sit aisy and graceful as ye would on your chair at home, hold the shoulders back, and toe in a bit on the pedals—ye won't be skinning your ankles so much then—and hold your foot up ready to get the other pedal. Hold light on the steering-bar. Push off hard. *Now!*"

"Will you hold me? I'm going—Oh, it's like riding an earthquake!"

Here Shuey made a run, letting the wheel have its own wild way—to teach the balance. "Keep the

STORIES THAT END WELL

front wheel under you!" he cried cheerfully. "Niver mind *where* you go. Keep a-pedalling; whatever you do, keep a-pedalling!"

"But I haven't got but one pedal!" gasped the rider.

"Ye lost it?"

"No; I *never had* but one! Oh, don't let me fall!"

"Oh, ye lost it in the beginning; now, then, I'll hold it steady, and you get both feet right. Here we go!"

Swaying frightfully from side to side, and wrenched from capsizing the wheel by the full exercise of Shuey's great muscles, Miss Hopkins reeled over the track. At short intervals she lost her pedals, and her feet, for some strange reason, instead of seeking the lost, simply curled up as if afraid of being hit. She gripped the steering-handles with an iron grasp, and her turns were such as an engine makes. Nevertheless Shuey got her up the track for some hundred feet, and then by a herculean sweep turned her round and rolled her back to the block. It was at this painful moment, when her whole being was concentrated on the effort to keep from toppling against Shuey, and even more to

THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS' BICYCLE

keep from toppling away from him, that Lorania's strained gaze suddenly fell on the frightened and sympathetic face of Mrs. Winslow. The good woman saw no fun in the spectacle, but rather an awful risk to life and limb. Their eyes met. Not a change passed over Miss Hopkins' features; but she looked up as soon as she was safe on the ground, and smiled. In a moment, before Mrs. Winslow could decide whether to run or to stand her ground, she saw the cyclist approaching—on foot.

"Won't you come in and sit down?" she said, smiling. "We are trying our new wheels."

And because she did not know how to refuse, Mrs. Winslow suffered herself to be handed over the fence. She sat on the bench beside Miss Hopkins in the prim attitude which had pertained to gentility in her youth, her hands loosely clasping each other, her feet crossed at the ankles.

"It's an awful sight, ain't it?" she breathed, "those little shiny things; I don't see how you ever git on them."

"I don't," said Miss Hopkins. "The only way I shall ever learn to start off is to start without the pedals. Does your son ride, Mrs. Winslow?"

STORIES THAT END WELL

"No, ma'am," said Mrs. Winslow; "but he knows how. When he was a boy nothing would do but he must have a bicycle, one of those things most as big as a mill wheel, and if you fell off you broke yourself somewhere, sure. I always expected he'd be brought home in pieces. So I don't think he'd have any manner of difficulty. Why, look at your friend; she's most riding alone!"

"She could always do everything better than I," cried Lorania, with ungrudging admiration. "See how she jumps off! Now I can't jump off any more than I can jump on. It seems so ridiculous to be told to press hard on the pedal on the side where you want to jump, and swing your further leg over first, and cut a kind of figure eight with your legs, and turn your wheel the way you don't want to go—all at once. While I'm trying to think of all those directions I always fall off. I got that wheel only yesterday, and fell before I even got away from the block. One of my arms looks like a Persian ribbon."

Mrs. Winslow cried out in unfeigned sympathy. She wished Miss Hopkins would use her linament that she used for Cyril when he was hurt by the burglars at the bank; he was bruised "terrible."

THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS' BICYCLE

"That must have been an awful time to you," said Lorania, looking with more interest than she had ever felt on the meek little woman; and she noticed the tremble in the decorously clasped hands.

"Yes, ma'am," was all she said.

"I've often looked over at you on the piazza, and thought how cozy you looked. Mr. Winslow always seems to be home evenings."

"Yes, ma'am. We sit a great deal on the piazza. Cyril's a good boy; he wa'n't nine when his father died; and he's been like a man helping me. There never was a boy had such willing little feet. And he'd set right there on the steps and pat my slipper and say what he'd git me when he got to earning money; and he's got me every last thing, foolish and all, that he said. There's that black satin gown, a sin and a shame for a plain body like me, but he would git it. Cyril's got a beautiful disposition, too, jest like his pa's, and he's a handy man about the house, and prompt at his meals. I wonder sometimes if Cyril was to git married if his wife would mind his running over now and then and setting with me awhile."

She was speaking more rapidly, and her eyes

STORIES THAT END WELL

strayed wistfully over to the Hopkins piazza, where Sibyl was sitting with the young soldier. Lorania looked at her pityingly.

"Why, surely," said she.

"Mothers have kinder selfish feelings," said Mrs. Winslow, moistening her lips and drawing a quick breath, still watching the girl on the piazza. "It's so sweet and peaceful for them, they forget their sons may want something more. But it's kinder hard giving all your little comforts up at once when you've had him right with you so long, and could cook just what he liked, and go right into his room nights if he coughed. It's all right, all right, but it's kinder hard. And beautiful young ladies that have had everything all their lives might—might not understand that a homespun old mother isn't wanting to force herself on them at all when they have company, and they have no call to fear it."

There was no doubt, however obscure the words seemed, that Mrs. Winslow had a clear purpose in her mind, nor that she was tremendously in earnest. Little blotches of red dabbled her cheeks, her breath came more quickly, and she swallowed between her words. Lorania could see the quiver in the muscles

THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS' BICYCLE

of her throat. She clasped her hands tight lest they should shake. "He is in love with Sibyl," thought Lorania. "The poor woman!" She felt sorry for her, and she spoke gently and reassuringly:

"No girl with a good heart can help feeling tenderly toward her husband's mother."

Mrs. Winslow nodded. "You're real comforting," said she. She was silent a moment, and then said, in a different tone: "You ain't got a large enough track. Wouldn't you like to have our pasture too?"

Lorania expressed her gratitude, and invited the Winslows to see the practice.

"My niece will come out to-morrow," she said, graciously.

"Yes? She is a real fine-appearing young lady," said Mrs. Winslow.

Both the cyclists exulted. Neither of them, however, was prepared to behold the track made and the fence down the very next morning when they came out, about ten o'clock, to the west side of Miss Hopkins' boundaries.

"As sure as you live, Maggie," exclaimed Lorania, eagerly, "he's got it all done! Now, that is

STORIES THAT END WELL

something like a lover. I only hope his heart won't be bruised as black and blue as I am with the wheel!"

"Shuey says the only harm your falls do you is to take away your confidence," said Mrs. Ellis.

"He wouldn't say so if he could see my *knees!*" retorted Miss Hopkins.

Mrs. Ellis, it will be observed, sheered away from the love affairs of Mr. Cyril Winslow. She had not yet made up her mind. And Mrs. Ellis, who had been married, did not jump at conclusions regarding the heart of man so readily as her spinster friend. She preferred to talk of the bicycle. Nor did Miss Hopkins refuse the subject. To her at this moment the most important object on the globe was the shining machine which she would allow no hand but hers to oil and dust. Both Mrs. Ellis and she were simply prostrated (as to their mental powers) by this new sport. They could not think nor talk nor read of anything but *the wheel*.

Between their accidents, they obtained glimpses of an exquisite exhilaration. And there was also to be counted the approval of their consciences, for they felt that no Turkish bath could wring out moisture from their systems like half an

THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS' BICYCLE

hour's pumping at the bicycle treadles. Lorania during the month had ridden through one bottle of liniment and two of witch hazel, and by the end of the second bottle could ride a short distance alone. But Lorania could not yet dismount unassisted, and several times she had felled poor Winslow to the earth when he rashly adventured to stop her. Captain Carr had a peculiar, graceful fling of the arm, catching the saddle bar with one hand while he steadied the handles with the other. He did not hesitate in the least to grab Lorania's belt if necessary. But poor modest Winslow, who fell upon the wheel and dared not touch the hem of a lady's bicycle skirt, was as one in the path of a cyclone, and appeared daily in a fresh pair of white trousers.

"Yous have now," Shuey remarked impressively, one day—"yous have now arrived at the most difficult and dangerous period in learning the wheel. It's similar to a baby when it's first learned to walk but ain't yet got sense in walking. When it was little it would stay put wherever ye put it, and it didn't know enough to go by itself, which is similar to you. When I was holding ye you couldn't fall, but now you're off alone depindent on yourself,

STORIES THAT END WELL

object-struck by every tree, taking most of the pasture to turn in, and not able to git off save by falling—”

“Oh, couldn’t you go with her somehow?” exclaimed Mrs. Winslow, appalled at the picture. “Wouldn’t a rope round her be some help? I used to put it round Cyril when he was learning to walk.”

“Well, no, ma’am,” said Shuey, patiently. “Don’t you be scared; the riding will come; she’s getting on grandly. And ye should see Mr. Winslow. ’Tis a pleasure to teach him. He rode in one lesson. I ain’t learning him nothing but tricks now.”

“But, Mr. Winslow, why don’t you ride here—with us?” said Sibyl, with her coquettish and flattering smile. “We’re always hearing of your beautiful riding. Are we never to see it?”

“I think Mr. Winslow is waiting for that swell English cycle suit that I hear about,” said the captain, grinning; and Winslow grew red to his eyelids.

Lorania gave an indignant side glance at Sibyl. Why need the girl make game of an honest man who loved her? Sibyl was biting her lips and darting side glances at the captain. She called the pasture practice slow, but she seemed, nevertheless, to enjoy

THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS' BICYCLE

herself sitting on the bench, the captain on one side and Winslow on the other, rattling off her girlish jokes, while her aunt and Mrs. Ellis, with the anxious, set faces of the beginner, were pedalling frantically after Cardigan. Lorania began to pity Winslow, for it was growing plain to her that Sibyl and the captain understood each other. She thought that even if Sibyl did care for the soldier, she need not be so careless of Winslow's feelings. She talked with the cashier herself, trying to make amends for Sibyl's absorption in the other man, and she admired the fortitude that concealed the pain that he must feel. It became quite the expected thing for the Winslows to be present at the practice; but Winslow had not yet appeared on his wheel. He used to bring a box of candy with him, or rather three boxes—one for each lady, he said—and a box of peppermints for his mother. He was always very attentive to his mother.

"And fancy, Aunt Margaret," laughed Sibyl, "he has asked both auntie and me to the theater. He is not going to compromise himself by singling one of us out. He's a careful soul. By the way, Aunt Margaret, Mrs. Winslow was telling me yesterday

STORIES THAT END WELL

that I am the image of auntie at my age. Am I? Do I look like her? Was she as slender as I?"

"Almost," said Mrs. Ellis, who was not so inflexibly truthful as her friend.

"No, Sibyl," said Lorania, with a deep, deep sigh, "I was always plump; I was a chubby *child!* And oh, what do you think I heard in the crowd at Manly's once? One woman said to another, 'Miss Hopkins has got a wheel.' 'Miss Sibyl?' said the other. 'No; the stout Miss Hopkins,' said the first creature; and the second—" Lorania groaned.

"What *did* she say to make you feel that way?"

"She said—she said, 'Oh, my!'" answered Lorania, with a dying look.

"Well, she was horrid," said Mrs. Ellis; "but you know you have grown thin. Come on; let's ride!"

"I *never* shall be able to ride," said Lorania, gloomily. "I can get on, but I can't get off. And they've taken off the brake, so I can't stop. And I'm object-struck by everything I look at. Some day I shall look down hill. Well, my will's in the lower drawer of the mahogany desk."

Perhaps Lorania had an occult inkling of the fu-

THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS' BICYCLE

ture. For this is what happened: That evening Winslow rode on to the track in his new English bicycle suit, which had just come. He hoped that he didn't look like a fool in those queer clothes. But the instant he entered the pasture he saw something that drove everything else out of his head, and made him bend over the steering-bar and race madly across the green; Miss Hopkins' bicycle was running away down hill! Cardigan, on foot, was pelt-ing obliquely, in the hopeless thought to intercept her, while Mrs. Ellis, who was reeling over the ground with her own bicycle, wheeled as rapidly as she could to the brow of the hill, where she tumbled off, and, abandoning the wheel, rushed on foot to her friend's rescue.

She was only in time to see a flash of silver and ebony and a streak of brown dart before her vision and swim down the hill like a bird. Lorania was still in the saddle, pedalling from sheer force of habit, and clinging to the handle-bars. Below the hill was a stone wall, and farther was the creek. There was a narrow opening in the wall where the cattle went down to drink; if she could steer through that she would have nothing worse than soft water

STORIES THAT END WELL

and mud; but there was not one chance in a thousand that she could pass that narrow space. Mrs. Winslow, horror-stricken, watched the rescuer, who evidently was cutting across to catch the bicycle.

"He's riding out of sight!" thought Shuey, in the rear. He himself did not slacken his speed, although he could not be in time for the catastrophe. Suddenly he stiffened; Winslow was close to the runaway wheel.

"Grab her!" yelled Shuey. "Grab her by the belt! *Oh, Lord!*"

The exclamation exploded like the groan of a shell. For while Winslow's bicycling was all that could be wished, and he flung himself in the path of the on-coming wheel with marvelous celerity and precision, he had not the power to withstand the never yet revealed number of pounds carried by Miss Lorania, impelled by the rapid descent and gathering momentum at every whirl. They met; he caught her; but instantly he was rolling down the steep incline and she was doubled up on the grass. He crashed sickeningly against the stone wall; she lay stunned and still on the sod; and their friends, with beating hearts, slid down to them. Mrs. Wins-

THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS' BICYCLE

low was on the brow of the hill. She blesses Shuey to this day for the shout he sent up, "Nobody killed, and I guess no bones broken."

When Margaret went home that evening, having seen her friend safely in bed, not much the worse for her fall, she was told that Cardigan wished to see her. Shuey produced something from his pocket, saying: "I picked this up on the hill, ma'am, after the accident. It maybe belongs to him, or it maybe belongs to her; I'm thinking the safest way is to just give it to you." He handed Mrs. Ellis a tiny gold-framed miniature of Lorania in a red leather case.

The morning was a sparkling June morning, dewy and fragrant, and the sunlight burnished the handles and pedals of the friends' bicycles standing on the piazza unheeded. It was the hour for morning practice, but Miss Hopkins slept in her chamber, and Mrs. Ellis sat in the little parlor adjoining, and thought.

She did not look surprised at the maid's announcement that Mrs. Winslow begged to see her for a few moments. Mrs. Winslow was pale. She was a good

STORIES THAT END WELL

sketch of discomfort on the very edge of her chair, clad in the black silk which she wore Sundays, her head crowned with her bonnet of state, and her hands stiff in a pair of new gloves.

"I hope you'll excuse me not sending up a card," she began. "Cyril got me some going on a year ago, and I *thought* I could lay my hand right on 'em, but I'm so nervous this morning I hunted all over, and they wasn't anywhere. I won't keep you. I jest wanted to ask if you picked up anything—a little red Russia-leather case—"

"Was it a miniature—a miniature of my friend Miss Hopkins?"

"I thought it all over, and I came to explain. You no doubt think it strange; and I can assure you that my son never let any human being look at that picture. I never knew about it myself till it was lost and he got up out of his bed—he ain't hardly able to walk—and staggered over here to look for it, and I followed him; and so he *had* to tell me. He had it painted from a picture that came out in the papers. He felt it was an awful liberty. But—you don't know how my boy feels, Mrs. Ellis; he has worshipped that woman for years. He ain't never had

'THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS' BICYCLE

a thought of anybody but her since they was children in school; and yet's he's been so modest and so shy of pushing himself forward that he didn't do a thing until I put him on to help you with this bicycle."

Margaret Ellis did not know what to say. She thought of the marquis; and Mrs. Winslow poured out her story: "He ain't never said a word to me till this morning. But don't I *know?* Don't I know who looked out so careful for her investments? Don't I know who was always looking out for her interest—silent, and always keeping himself in the background? Why, she couldn't even buy a cow that he wa'n't looking round to see that she got a good one! 'Twas him saw the gardener, and kept him from buying that cow with tuberculosis, 'cause he knew about the herd. He knew by finding out. He worshipped the very cows she owned, you may say, and I've seen him patting and feeding up her dogs; it's to our house that big mastiff always goes every night. Mrs. Ellis, it ain't often that a woman gits love such as my son is offering, only he da'sn't offer it, and it ain't often a woman is loved by such a good man as my son. He ain't got any bad habits;

STORIES THAT END WELL

he'll die before he wrongs anybody; and he has got the sweetest temper you ever see; and he's the tidiest man about a house you could ask, and the promptest about meals."

Mrs. Ellis looked at her flushed face, and sent another flood of color into it, for she said, "Mrs. Winslow, I don't know how much good I may be able to do, but I am on your side."

Her eyes followed the little black figure when it crossed the lawn. She wondered whether her advice was good, for she had counseled that Winslow come over in the evening.

"Maggie," said a voice. Lorania was in the doorway. "Maggie," she said, "I ought to tell you that I heard every word."

"Then *I* can tell *you*," cried Mrs. Ellis, "that he is fifty times more of a man than the marquis, and loves you fifty thousand times better!"

Lorania made no answer, not even by a look. What she felt Mrs. Ellis could not guess. Nor was she any wiser when Winslow appeared at her gate, just as the sun was setting.

"I didn't think I would better intrude on Miss Hopkins," said he, "but perhaps you could tell me

THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS' BICYCLE

how she is this evening. My mother told me how kind you were, and perhaps you—you would advise me if I might venture to send Miss Hopkins some flowers."

Out of the kindness of her heart Mrs. Ellis averted her eyes from his face; thus she was able to perceive Lorania saunter out of the Hopkins gate. So changed was she by the bicycle practice that, wrapped in her niece's shawl, she made Margaret think of the girl. An inspiration flashed to her; she knew the cashier's dependence on his eye-glasses, and he was not wearing them.

"If you want to know how Miss Hopkins is, why not speak to her niece now?" she said.

He started. He saw Miss Sibyl, as he supposed, and he went swiftly down the street. "Miss Sibyl," he began, "may I ask how is your aunt?"—and then she turned.

She blushed, then she laughed aloud. "Has the bicycle done so much for me?" said she.

"The bicycle didn't need to do *anything* for you!" he cried, warmly.

Mrs. Ellis, a little distance in the rear, heard, turned, and walked thoughtfully away. "They're

STORIES THAT END WELL

off," said she—she had acquired a sporting tinge of thought from Shuey Cardigan. "If with that start he can't make the running, it's a wonder."

"I have invited Mr. Winslow and his mother to dinner," said Miss Hopkins, in the morning. "Will you come too, Maggie?"

"I'll back him against the marquis," thought Margaret, gleefully.

A week later Lorania said: "I really think I must be getting thinner. Fancy Mr. Winslow, who is so clear-sighted, mistaking me for Sibyl! He says—I told him how I had suffered from my figure—he says it can't be what he has suffered from his. Do you think him so very short, Maggie? Of course he isn't tall, but he has an elegant figure, I think, and I never saw anywhere such a rider!"

Mrs. Ellis answered, heartily: "He isn't very small, and he is a beautiful figure on the wheel!" And added to herself, "I know what was in that letter she sent yesterday to the marquis! But to think of its all being due to the bicycle!"

THE SPELLBINDER

Not long since the writer had occasion to pass through the scene of this story. It would be hard to find anywhere a more pleasant and prosperous land. Fertile fields and shady country roads and pastures where sleek cattle are contentedly grazing; great stacks of green alfalfa; farmhouses with flowers and vines, as well as thriving kitchen gardens; windmills that pipe houses with water as well as fill the barn troughs; automobiles and good roads —there could hardly be a greater contrast. And it is pleasant to hear that the pioneers who suffered incredible hardships during the lean years are now reaping the reward of their toil, courage and versatile, indomitable ingenuity.

THE frozen soil rattled under the horses' hoofs; the wagon wheels rattled on their own account. A December wind was keen enough to make the driver wrap his patched quilt closer and pull his battered straw hat lower over his ears. He was a man of thirty, with high, tanned features and eyes that

STORIES THAT END WELL

would have been handsome but for their sullen frown.

"I should call it getting good and ready for a blizzard," observed the other man on the board (seat the wagon had none); "maybe he won't come."

"He'll come fast enough," returned the driver; "you don't catch buzzards staying in for weather!"

"I don't know. He's a pretty luxurious young scoundrel. Bixby says he had a letter from him—very particular about a fire in his room, and plenty of hot water and towels. Bixby is worried lest the boys make a fuss with him in his hotel."

"Bixby is a coward from Wayback," was the driver's single comment or reply. The other man eyed the dark profile at his shoulder, out of the tail of his eye rubbing his hands up and down his wrists under his frayed sleeves. He was a young man, shorter of stature than the driver. He had a round, genial, tanned face, and a bad cold on him. His hands were bare because he had lent his mittens to the driver; but he wore a warm, if shabby greatcoat and a worn fur cap.

"I don't suppose," he said in a careless tone, "you fellows mean to do more than scare the lad well."

THE SPELLBINDER

"We scared the last man. Doc Russell got him fairly paralyzed; told him 'bout the Shylock that turned out the Kinneys, and Miss Kinney's dying in the wagon, she was so weak; and Kin—somebody ('course he didn't mention names) shooting that man; and their arresting Kinney, and the jury acquitting him without leaving the box. Oh, he told a lot of stories. Some of 'em, I guess, he made up out of his own head; but that Iowa lawyer swallered the whole batch, hide and hoofs and all. And he couldn't git out of town quick enough! But what's the good? Here's this young dude come again. Say, did you know it's his pa that owns most of the stock in the trust?"

"No?"

"Yes, sir. He's got the upper hand of 'em all. They've bought up every last bit of foreclosed land 'round here. Yes, we was so mighty smart, we fixed it that nobody'd dare to buy; and nobody 'round here *would* dare, even s'posing they got the money, which they ain't—"

"There certainly ain't much loose money 'round here, Wesley. At least, when I ran the paper I didn't find it; I was glad to rent an abandoned farm

STORIES THAT END WELL

and trade my subscription list for enough corn to pay the first instalment on some stock and a cultivator."

"Did you pay any more?"

"No; times got worse instead of better. I'd have lost the stock and the cultivator and every blamed thing in the way of implement I've got if it hadn't been for you fellows running the implement man out of the country; he'd a chattel mortgage that was a terror. But what were you saying about the land? Nobody would buy?"

"Of course nobody would buy, and we hugged ourselves we was so durned slick. Oh, my! Now, here comes along one of them bloody trusts that's eating this country up, and goes to the land company and buys the foreclosed land for a song. It goes all the cheaper because its known far and wide that we elected the sheriff not to enforce writs, but to resist 'em; and the same with all the officers; and we're ready to shoot down any man that tries to push us off the earth. That scared folks, and the investment company sold cheap as dirt. They knew they couldn't git anybody to take up a farm 'round here. Look a' there!" He jerked the point of the

THE SPELLBINDER

switch that served for whip in the direction of a dark bulk looming against the glowing belt of red in the west. The outlines of a ruined chimney toppled over the misshapen roof. The door and window openings gaped forlornly; doors and windows were gone long since, wrenched off for other needs. Bit by bit the house had been nibbled at—here a porch platform taken, there a patch of weather-boarding, shingles pulled from the roof, the corn crib a wreck, the outbuildings carried away piece-meal—until, a sadder ruin than fire leaves, it faced the sunset and the prairie.

“That farm belonged to as hard-working, smart a feller as ever handled a plow. Look at them fields, gone to desolation like everything else, but the furrows used to be as straight’s a line with a ruler. He fought the hard times and the drought till his wife died, and then he said to me, ‘I’m beat; I’m going to take the baby back to Winnie’s folks. If I’d only gone last year I could have took Winnie, too. The company kin have my farm, and I hope to God it’ll be the curse to them it’s been to me!’ There the farm is. And look further down”—shifting the switch to another direction—“there’s another dropping to

STORIES THAT END WELL

pieces. Lord, when I think of the stories they told me about the crops when I fust came and put in four hundred dollars that I'd worked hard for in a saw-mill, and I think how we used to set 'round the fire evenings, my wife and I, talking about how the town was a-growing and what it would be when the trees was growed and our children was going to school, and how we'd have a cabinet organ and we'd have a top buggy, and we'd send for her mother, who didn't jest like it with Bill's wife—we was jest like children, making believe! But that ain't what I was driving at. Here it is. We calculated that we'd be let alone, because the poor, miserable remnants of stock and machines and farms we got simply wasn't worth outside folks taking, and inside folks wouldn't risk their lives by dispossessing us. That's how we sized it up, ain't it?"

"I don't see yet what you're after, Wesley."

"You will. We reasoned that way. But along comes this company, this—trust, that's clean against the laws and don't give a curse for that, and it buys up the whole outfit. I tell you, Mr. Robbins, there ain't five men in this community that that trust ain't got the legal right to turn out on the prairies to-mor-

THE SPELLBINDER

row. They've all been foreclosed, and the year of grace is up. Most of us here ain't got no show at all—legally. And so they send a man down here to see about gitting out writs and finishing us up."

"But who'll they get to buy, Wesley Orr?"

"They're not needing much buying. They're on to a new scheme—going to turn all these farms into big pastures and fatten cattle with alfalfa, raise it and ship it; then the lower part of the county, down below town, they intend to run a ditch through from the river and irrigate it. They will fetch in a colony who'll pay them about ten times what they paid, I expect, and—"

"But we won't let them—"

"Depends on how many guns the colony's got and how much fight there's in it. They'll try it, anyhow, unless—"

"Unless—" repeated Robbins uneasily.

"Unless they're scared off, *unless they think it's death for a man to tackle us.*"

Robbins rubbed his hands harder; he bit his lip. A little space of silence fell between them. Off to the south, where the little town was set like an island in the darkening prairie, the lights began to twinkle;

STORIES THAT END WELL

they were yellow and scattered. Even at that distance one could tell that they burned few to the house.

"I kinder wish," said Robbins, "that he came from another town."

"What's the difference about the town?"

"Oh, none, I guess. But that town, it's in Iowa, and it sent the best things we've ever had. One woman put in a lot of jams and jellies and tea—such tea! My wife was sick then, and I didn't know but I'd lose her. I gave her some of that tea and some jam, and she began to pick up from that day. It was a quince jam, and made her think of home, she said. Her father was a Connecticut man, and they had an orchard with quince trees in it—I remember—" He did not finish the sentence, but he sighed as he absently ran his eye over the gaps in the harness mended with rope.

"I bet *he* didn't have nothing to do with that box," said Orr; "most like, the people sent us that were poor folks themselves, and had to pinch to make up for the things they sent us. 'Tain't the rich people are sorriest for poor folks. This young Wallace—his father's the owner of a big paper, and rich be-

THE SPELLBINDER

sides, and he's got this boy in training for editor; and when that first duck couldn't do nothing out here, the old man said he'd buy in, and the young one thought it a mighty smart thing to do to come over here and turn a lot of half-starved women and children out in winter. What's *he* care? What do any of these rich folks care?"

"I don't think you're fair, Wesley," said Robbins. "All the rich folks aren't mean. I know more about them than you." He spoke with a dawning of pride in his tone, which deepened a little.

"Yes, I know you used to belong to them," said Orr, "and I guess you were decent to the poor. But you'll admit you didn't have no notion how it cuts to work every muscle in you and to lay awake thinking yourself half crazy to puzzle out better ways to make money and yet to feel every year you're a-sinking deeper in the slough! I've worked five years here, and 'cepting the first year, every single year has piled interest on the mortgage. Every year we've had less clothes to wear and poorer stuff to eat, and it's been mend instead of buy, and we've had more debts and more worries every year. I tell you, Mr. Robbins, I thought it would *kill* me, once, to come on

STORIES THAT END WELL

the county. I'd 'a' said I'd starve first; but you can't see your wife and children starve. I went in last winter, and asked for relief. I'd that old hound dog of mine with me; you knowed him. He'd been a good dog. He come with us when we come here, running under the wagon. All the children had played with him. I took him into town, and I asked every one I knowed would he have that dog for a gift; I showed off all his tricks, feeling like I was dirty mean deceiving him, for I done it so somebody would be willing to take him home and feed him and take care of him, for it's God's truth I hadn't enough for him and the children too. But nobody wanted him; he was pretty old, and he wasn't never handsome. And one store I was in, as I went out I heard a drummer that was trying to sell goods say, 'I saw that feller at the Relief, but I notice he's able to keep a dog. Lets the children go hungry ruther'n the dog, I guess.' I kinder turned on him, then I turned back again, and I whistled to Sport, and I looked at him and saw how his ribs showed and his eyes was kinder sunk. He wagged his tail and yelped like he used to, seeing me look at him; and then I went straight to that drug-store Billy used

THE SPELLBINDER

to keep—Billy Harvey. He moved away last year; he was a good friend of mine. I said to him, ‘Billy, you got something that would kill a dog in a flash, so he’d never suffer or know what hurt him?’ And Billy—he understood, and he said he had. ‘You jest put it on his tongue and he’d never know what killed him.’ Billy was sorry for me. He gave it to me for nothing, and he gave me some bones and corn bread and milk; so Sport had a good dinner. And he come right up to me and looked me in the eyes, wagging his tail. His eyes was kinder dim, but they was just as loving as ever. And he was wagging his tail when he dropped. Then I went home, and the children asked me where was Sport, and little Peggy cried—oh, Lord!”

“It was awful hard on you, Wesley,” said Robbins gently.

“I suppose it wasn’t nothing to what some men have suffered. There was poor Tommy Walker, give up his farm when it was foreclosed—thought he had to—and went off tramping to Kansas City, and after he’d tramped a week there, looking for a job, give it up and jumped into the river. And you know how old man Osgood killed himself, honest a old

STORIES THAT END WELL

man as ever lived; always kept his machines under cover, too; *he* couldn't stand it. They found it harder—and lots more, too; but I've found it hard enough. And I know I'd shoot that sneaking, sneering young Shylock, and not mind it near so much as I minded killing poor Sport."

"I don't know but we'd all better quit," said the younger man with a sigh. "This isn't a living country. Three years of drought would break any country up. It's not meant to live in. We had a fair crop this year, but it's so low; and freights, though they're lower, are pretty high. I don't see any way out of it. And I declare I think if we run this young fellow off we'll only get a bad name for the place."

"I don't care for bad names," said the other sullenly. "I got a wife and three children; I was foreclosed a year ago—so's you, so's a lot of the boys; we're at the end of our string now—legally. So what did we say? We said we didn't care, was it legal or illegal; that laws was made to skin the poor man; and we elected a sheriff we could depend on not to enforce the laws, and we druv off the blood-suckers they sent out here. They say one feller was killed. I don't know. Guess that's one of Doc Rus-

THE SPELLBINDER

sell's stories. The boys talk a lot about the cause of all this here trouble, and how we're going to have a revolution, and how referendum and initiendum will help, and how free silver will help—I guess, myself, a little more rain three years ago when corn was up would have helped more'n anything—and they talk how they're fighting the battles of the poor man, and the Eastern bloodsuckers has ruined us, and the Shylocks are devouring us, and they holler the roof off. I listen to 'em, but I don't believe 'em any more than you do."

"But," interrupted the other man eagerly, "I voted with the people's party—"

"Of course you did. We was going to be unanimous, and you dassn't stand out; but you didn't believe in it. Me neither. I ain't makin' any pretense, but I'll tell you it's jest here—I'm down to bed-rock. If I let my farm be took away and my stock, what's going to become of my wife and children? You can call it stealing, or resisting the law, or anything you please, but I'll kill that feller before I'll let him turn me out."

"Don't you think we can scare him off? Killing's a nasty word."

STORIES THAT END WELL

"My father was with John Brown; he helped kill a man. He never lost no sleep about it; I shan't neither. Look here, Mr. Robbins, I got lots of time to think, winters—lots. Remorse and all them fine feelings you read of, they don't belong to folks that are way down in the dirt. You got to have something to eat and wear, and not have your stomach sassing you, and you half froze most of the time; when your body is in sech a fix it's keeping your mind so full there ain't any show for any other feelings. And look a' here, there's worse"—his voice sank. "Why, you git to that pass you ain't able to feel for your own wife and babies. When this morning Peggy kept hushing the baby, and she was fretting and moaning, and Peggy says to me, couldn't I git a little crackers in town; maybe the baby could eat them? I didn't feel nothing 'cept a numb aching. I kept saying, 'I'd 'a' felt that, once!' But I didn't feel it now. And, all of a sudden, it come to me 'twas because I was gitting *past* feeling—like you do when you're froze, jest before you die. I read a story once, when I was a little shaver, that kept me awake nights many a time. It was about a Russian nobleman out sleigh-riding with his children, three of

THE SPELLBINDER

'em, on one of them steppes; and the wolves chased them. The father had a pistol, and he would shoot one of the wolves, and then the cowardly cusses would stop to tear the wounded critter to pieces and eat him, giving the folks in the sleigh a little more time; but every time the distance between the wolves and them when they stopped was a little smaller; but they were getting closer to the town, and they could see the lights. So the father, he kept on shooting, until the wolves were jumping up and grabbing at the sleigh, and the last time he shot a wolf he used up his last cartridge; then, when they come after him again, when the lights were nearer, and he knew if he could stop 'em once more he could escape, he—he throwed out one of the children; because it was this way: if he jumped out himself the children were so little they couldn't drive, and they'd be tipped up, and all three of them lost, so he throwed out the child he loved the best, and they got to town safely; but he went raving crazy. Well, I thought of him, and I said, if baby died there'd be the more chance for the others—”

“Look here, Wesley,” his companion interrupted,

STORIES THAT END WELL

"*quit it!* You're getting light-headed. Get rid of such fool thoughts as those or you'll be going off to the insane asylum; and mighty little use your family will have of you *there!*"

Orr gave him no answer. Robbins watched his impassive face and frowned.

"He's not bad-hearted, but he's desperate. You can't appeal to a desperate man," he thought, "and the other boys are the same way. There'll be wild work there to-night, unless that young fool has the papers with him and will give them up. You're a fool, George Robbins, to mix yourself up in it on the chance of getting a few dollars from a Kansas City paper for a telegram!"

Silently the two men looked at the nearing lights, while the wagon creaked and swayed and rattled over the road.

"We got to save the lantern to go home by," Orr remarked at last, "else I'd light up; they ain't got any more lights in the streets. But I guess we can see."

There were enough lights in the windows to reveal the wide untidiness of the street, the black, boarded windows of the empty shops, the gaps in

THE SPELLBINDER

the sidewalk, the haggard gardens, where savage winds had blown the heart out of deserted rose-trees and geraniums. In general the sky-line was low and the roofs the simplest peaks; but it was broken in a few places by three and four storied brick buildings of the florid pomp on which a raw Western town loves to lavish its money. Now they loomed, dark and silent, landmarks of vanished ambition. Robbins, who was a man of parts and education, with a fanciful turn, felt the air of defeat and desolation hanging over the town choke him like miasma. To him the dreariness was the more poignant for the half a dozen little shops that still flickered their challenge to fate in the guise of a dim coal-oil lamp in the window. There appeared to be no customers at these dismal marts; in some cases not even the shopkeeper was visible, and only the stove in the rear of the room kept a lonesome red eye on the shelves. The sole sparks of life in the place were at the hotel. It had been built "during the boom"—a large rectangle of wood, with a cheap and gaudy piazza, all painted four shades of green, which the climate had burned and blistered and bleached into one sickly, mottled brown. Long ago the stables of the hostelry

STORIES THAT END WELL

had been abandoned, but this night the stable yard was full of wagons.

The upper story of the hotel was dark, and the greater part of the lower story; but the kitchen was bright, and yellow light leaked through every chink and crack in the office blinds.

"Boys have turned out well, I guess," said Robbins.

"They *better* turn out!" said Orr.

No word was spoken by either while they unhitched their horses, led them within the sheds, and tied them among the sorry company already housed. Robbins noted that after Orr had laid the blanket which had served them for robe on one thin back, he flung his own quilt over the other. Then they stumbled (for they were unwieldy with cold) through the yard to the hotel.

The office was full of men, gathered about the stove, talking to each other. The innkeeper sat behind his counter, affecting to busy himself with a blotted ledger. Originally he had been a stout man, but he had lost flesh of late years. He was wrinkled and flabby, and the furtive eyeshots that he cast toward the stove were anxious beyond his concealing.

THE SPELLBINDER

Any one, however, could perceive that matters of heavy import were being discussed. The miserably clad men about the stove all looked sullen. There was none of the easy-going badinage so habitual with Westerners. They exchanged glances rather than words; what words were spoken were uttered in low tones.

"Where is he?" said Orr, in the same undertone to a large man in a buffalo coat. The large man was the sheriff of the county. He jerked his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the dining-room.

"What's he like?"

"Little feller with a game leg."

Orr frowned. Robbins felt uncomfortable. A gaunt man on the outskirts of the circle added: "He's powerful slick, though; you can bet your life. That girl Susy is all won over already; and she's suspecting something, sure's shooting. I guess she's warned him there's something in the air."

"Well, if there is, I don't know it," said the sheriff.

"You never *will* know anything about it, either," a gray-haired man added.

"That's right, Kinney," two or three spoke at

STORIES THAT END WELL

once. But immediately a silence fell on them. Robbins, who felt himself an outsider, could see that the others drew closer together. Once or twice he caught sinister murmurings. He began to wish that he had not come.

"It would be no earthly use for me to chip in and try to soften them," he thought. "They're crazy with defeat and misery and the fool stuff campaign orators have crammed down their throats."

Just then the dining-room door opened, and Robbins was the only one of the group to turn his head. The other men gazed at the fire, and the heavy silence grew heavier.

The man who came out of the room was young, slight of figure, and he limped a little. Nevertheless, there was nothing of dejection in his bearing or his face. He was freckled to a degree, smooth-shaven, and his teeth were beautiful. He had fine eyes also, a deep blue, flashing like steel as they moved from one object to another. The eyes were keen, alert, and determined; but being set rather wide apart under his light brows, they gave the face a candid, almost artless, look, and when he smiled the deep dimple in his cheek made it as merry as a child's.

THE SPELLBINDER

"Good evening, gentlemen," said he cheerfully. No one responded. Robbins made a gurgle in his throat, which the newcomer generously accepted for salutation, promptly approaching the fire at Robbins' elbow.

"Cold weather," said he. Two or three of the company lifted their heads and eyed the speaker. Robbins wondered were they as keenly conscious as he of the young fellow's trimly fitted clothes, what good quality that rough plaided brown stuff was, how dainty was his linen. He looked at the home people's ragged coats, he thought of the poverty that he knew, and the reflection of a sneer was on his own lips, and, somehow, a lump in his throat.

"Too cold weather for folks to travel unless they're wanted bad!" said the gray-haired man on the edge of the company. There was a thrill of some strong feeling in his deep voice.

"It does seem that way," agreed the young man with undiminished vivacity. "I am glad to get to a shelter. By the way, I hear this is a dry town. Will some of you gentlemen have something with me?" He had pulled out a flask and was flashing his brilliant smile at Robbins.

STORIES THAT END WELL

"No, thank you, I don't drink," said Robbins; but he felt his throat itching at the sight.

"We'll drink your licker after we've finished our business with you," the gray man struck in. He was old Captain Sparks, who had been very bitter since his eldest son went crazy with overwork and sun-stroke and killed himself. The other men laughed. They looked at each other; they looked with goading hate in their dull eyes at the stranger; and they laughed.

"Here, Johnny," said the young man, taking no notice, "run up to twenty-five and fetch me the bag there, the black one. If we are to drink to our business, I want you all to join. You are all interested, I take it? And get some glasses while you are about it."

The boy whom he addressed, the landlord's son, a lad of twelve, had been busy staring at the stranger ever since he entered the room. He ran away, but as he ran could not restrain himself from flinging one or two glances back over his shoulder.

"Don't you smoke, either?" said the stranger to Robbins, his hand to his breast pocket.

"Only a pipe," answered Robbins. He wished that

THE SPELLBINDER

he didn't feel an absurd, morbid sympathy for the poor fool's pluck sneaking into his consciousness.

"What are we waiting for?" The captain whispered it to a mild-eyed, short-bearded man next him; but the captain's whisper carried far. "Aw, give him rope!" suggested the mild-eyed man; "maybe he ain't so sandy's he seems."

Not seeming to recognize any chill in his reception, the young stranger approached the stove. No one moved to admit him to the inner circle; this, also, he did not seem to observe. "This whole country looks as if you had been having hard times," he continued. His voice had full, rich, magnetic notes, but its unfamiliar intonations jarred on his hearers; they knew them to belong to the East, and they hated the East. "It's pretty sad to ride through miles and miles of farming country and see the burned fence-posts that caught fire from the cinders, just lying where they fell, and the smoke not coming out of one farm-house chimney in six. It looks as if the farmers out this way had simply given up the fight."

"You've hit it," said the mild-eyed man; "they have. Some of them have moved away and some

STORIES THAT END WELL

of them have killed themselves, after they've lost their stock on chattel mortgages and lost their land to the improvement company. There ought to be lots of ghosts on those abandoned farms and in those houses where the fences are down. This country is full of ghosts. We ain't much better than ghosts ourselves."

"It was the three dry years, I suppose."

"That and the mortgage sharks and the Shylocks from the East," old Captain Sparks interrupted in a venomous tone; "what pickings the drought left they got."

"Pretty rough!" said the stranger, declining the combat again. "There's one man I want to meet here; his name is Russell—Doctor Russell."

The mild-eyed man explained that his name was Russell; the other men looked puzzled and suspicious. "What's his little game?" whispered the captain. "It won't go, whatever it is," said the man next him. Robbins heard question and answer distinctly; but the young fellow near him did not wince. "Are you the one that wrote to Fairport, Doctor Russell? I guess you must be."

"Yes, I wrote to Fairport," said Russell.

THE SPELBINDER

“Well, I hope you liked the barrel we sent, and the boxes. They were going to send them to another place, but your letter decided us. That’s my church, you know, which sent them. And, for that matter, it was your letter first turned my father’s attention to investing in your part of the country. Oh, tell me, where did that tea go? My mother *would* send her best London mixture—”

“Was it your mother?” Robbins spoke. With a red face and a flash of his eyes at the sullen group about him, he withdrew his chair, making a clear passage to the stove. “I’d like to thank her, then, and her son for her; that tea and that quince jam—whose was the quince jam?”

“I rather think my mother put that in, too.”

“Well, it almost cured my wife; it was better than medicine, that and the tea, for, not to mention that we couldn’t get any medicine, it put heart into her as medicine couldn’t. I wonder was it your mother, or who was it put in that volume of college songs? *I* got that. You wouldn’t think it, but I’m a university man—Harvard—”

The young fellow caught his hand and gripped it hard. “Harvard? So am I—Martin Wallace, ’92.”

STORIES THAT END WELL

"My name is George Robbins, and I'm a good deal farther back; and, as you can see, I'm down on my luck. But there's no need going into my hard-luck story; it's like a lot of our stories here. You see where we are—hardly shoes to our feet; not because we have been shiftless or idle, or have wronged anybody; yet the cutthroats and thieves in the penitentiary have had better fare and suffered less with cold and hunger than we have. And it's not that we are fools, either; we're not uneducated. There are at least three other college men in our community; there's Doc Russell—"

"*I am,*" drawled Russell; "much good it's done me; but I won honors at the University of Iowa."

"I didn't win any honors, but I went to the State University—was graduated there before I went to Harvard. But—you aren't Teddy Russell, Teddy Russell of the Glee Club and the football eleven?"

"Yes, I am Teddy Russell."

"E. D. Russell, of course; why didn't I guess? You were there two years before me, but I daresay they are talking of you still; and the way you won a touchdown with a broken rib on you, and the time all the rest of the Glee Club missed the train at

THE SPELLBINDER

Fairport, going to Lone Tree, and you went on with the banjoes and were the whole thing for three-quarters of an hour! Well, I'm glad to meet you, Doctor. Let us have a good song or two together after business."

Russell unconsciously felt for the cravat which was not round his soiled and frayed collar; he buttoned his wreck of a frock coat. "Yes, we will," he began, but his voice stuck in his throat as the captain's rough grasp gripped his arm.

"I guess not," said the captain; "business first, young feller!"

Russell shook off the hand, muttering something too low for Robbins' ear; but Robbins sidled nearer to him, so near that he was able to exchange a single glance and to see Russell's lips form the words, "Watch Orr!" They understood each other.

"Weren't you from Ann Arbor yourself, Captain?" said Robbins, grabbing at any straw of peace.

"I've been too poor ever since the war to remember whether I ever had a college education or not," retorted the captain with a sneer. "I belong to the people now; their cause is my cause. Where do *you* belong? We've tended your folks when you were

STORIES THAT END WELL

sick, and helped you lay by your crops, and driven the mortgage sharks off your stuff. Say, what are you doing now? Are you monkeying around to turn traitor or coward, or what's the matter?"

"We're all right, Captain," answered Russell, the western burr on his tongue as soft and leisurely as ever, and no hint of excitement in his manner; "but I see no harm in letting Mr. Wallace answer our questions before we fly off the handle." So saying, before the captain realized his purpose he edged through the crowd to Wallace's side. Robbins followed him; and the eyes of all the others turned to the three menacing and eager.

"All I ask is to answer questions and to make my proposition to you," said Wallace, his fearless young eyes running round the circle. "If you don't like it you can refuse and send me home—to make other arrangements."

"No, we ain't going to send you home," said Orr. It was the first time that he had spoken. Wallace flashed a keen glance at him and spoke his next words directly to him. "But I'm sure you won't want to do it. You see, I'm your last chance and you *have* to examine it!"

THE SPELLBINDER

They had not expected such an answer. A little vibration ran like a wave over the gaunt, ferociously attentive faces. Wallace's eyes were fixed on Orr's face, which did not change. Orr's hand was in the breast of his ragged waistcoat.

"You people have certainly had the devil's own time and through no fault of yours, unless it's a fault that you aren't quitters!"

"That's right," said Robbins. Orr's eyes narrowed a little. Wallace continued, not taking his own eyes off the farmer's:

"This country is all right when there's a good year, but the good years come so seldom! What you fellows need down here is not free silver, but free water. With plenty of water you can raise big crops; and down in this valley there is not the danger, if we dig ditches, of the river running dry; we can get—"

"And who'll pay for irrigation?" a voice demanded. Wallace did not shift his gaze to the speaker; he talked to Orr as if Orr were the only man in the room: "We expect to furnish the money."

"And what will happen till the ditches are digged?"

STORIES THAT END WELL

"There's alfalfa to be raised on all these abandoned fields."

"And what's to become of *us?*?" said Orr. "I can see where you folks can git a holt and come out even; but what's going to become of us? Are we to move off the earth and let you stay here?"

Every one listened for Wallace's answer. Even the boy in the doorway, returning with Wallace's bag, stood half scared at the foot of the stairs, not daring to go forward.

"Why not stay and take pot luck with us?" said Wallace, coolly. "We bought the mortgages cheap, and we'll sell them cheap. We'll sell water rights cheap also. And you will make better colonists than any we could import—cheaper, too. It's for our interests as well as yours to make a deal with you and to make one that will be satisfactory. Isn't it?"

Orr's hand dropped to his side, he shuffled his feet, his eyes turned from Wallace to seek the captain. "I hadn't figured it out you was going to make any such proposition," said the captain.

"Perhaps you thought we intended to chuck you all out in the cold and hog everything. We are neither such pigs nor such fools. You fellows can help

THE SPELLBINDER

us more than anybody else. Here is Johnny. Now, let's come to business; but first, Johnny, get some glasses. We'll all drink to the new deal."

And afterwards they told with chuckles how even the captain, who was an original Prohibitionist before he became a Populist, touched his lips to the glass that was passed over the big map.

"All you folks here need is *hope*," said the cheerful young Iowan; "you have plenty of pluck and plenty of sense and oodles of experience; and we stand ready to put in the capital. Now, what do you say; does it go?"

After an hour of talk over the maps, he repeated the question, and the captain himself led the chorus, "It goes. We'll all stand by you!"

The blizzard had not come, and the moon was shining when George Robbins and Wesley Orr drove home from town. A basket was carefully held on Orr's knees. Robbins was caroling the chorus to "Johnny Harvard" and wishing a health to him and his true love at the top of a hoarse and husky voice. Orr looked solemnly ahead into the little wavering disk of radiance that their lantern cast. Once he shivered violently, but he was not cold. Suddenly

STORIES THAT END WELL

he spoke. There was a quiver in his face and his voice, but all he said was: "Say, he was dead right. We was so desperate we was crazy. Hope, that was what we needed, and he give it to us; but how some fellers would have messed that job, getting round to that same proposal we all wanted to hug him for! And—I'm glad he didn't. I'm almighty glad we didn't git a chance to do what we set out to do. He was slick. Say, what is it they call them newspaper boys? Spellbinders? That's him—a first-class, A-number-one spellbinder!"

THE OBJECT OF THE FEDERATION

“**I** JOINED a woman’s club in the Federation a little over two years ago,” said Mrs. Hardy. “I didn’t know what was the object then; and to tell you the truth, I am no wiser now.”

“You know as much as I,” was her neighbor’s reply, politely given, the neighbor, however, feeling no real interest, at the moment, in anything outside the approaching election of president, and the gossip regarding a possible “dark horse” which was buzzing behind her, between some better informed members of the delegation.

The babble of mighty waters is like the noise that filled the theater. It surged from the plant-decked platform (where it might be likened to nothing more resonant than the hum of insects of a summer night) through the auditorium, to the dais under the balconies. The dais was noisy, always, not because its occupants were any more inclined to talk than other

STORIES THAT END WELL

women, but because it was the rarest thing in the world for them to hear anyone either on the stage or the floor; and generally, they had to vote by their eyes, watching the advocates of their pet measures; and rising or sitting by their example; hence they solaced themselves with conversation.

At this moment, however, the quiet gentlewoman with the gavel, behind the long table, had not lifted her hand; and the upper part of the hall (which being in good hearing distance, was used to keep silence and criticise the talkers) was as busy with tongues and hands as its neighbors. So Mrs. Hardy, smiling a little at her neighbor's absent glance, listened until her thoughts wandered far afield. She only half caught the enthusiasm of the neighbor to her right, over an address on village improvement, or the indignation of the dames to the left, who were rehearsing the political baseness of Massachusetts. She was recalling a day thirty-three years ago. She did not see the secretary behind the table, whispering to the president; she did not notice a little group to the left near where the silk banner of Massachusetts fluttered, putting their heads together and gesticulating above their whispers. She forgot her sur-

THE OBJECT OF THE FEDERATION

roundings and saw only a tall young man whose ardent eyes sank as they met her own, a handsome young fellow, who caught her hand in his, as they sat alone in the carriage, driving to the depot, and kissed the fingers and the wedding-ring, crying out he was not half good enough for her. "He was in love with me, *then!*" she thought. But now? Well, it was not to be expected a man with a great business and cares and money to think about and political affairs (for they were importuning Darius to go to the senate) should be paying romantic compliments to his middle-aged wife. Nevertheless, Darius had never forgotten their anniversary until last year. On her reminding him, he had whistled and laughed. "So it is," says he, "we ought to spend it together; it's a shame I have to go to Chicago; why don't you come with me?"

Smiling (yet a foolish something not merry was twitching at her nerves), she had declined. But she made a good excuse; Darius never guessed that she was so silly as to mind; and he brought her a sweet pigeon-blood ruby ring, set in diamonds, from Chicago; and he kissed her when he slipped it on her finger—kissed her cheek, not her hand. She won-

STORIES THAT END WELL

dered, at this minute, why she should wish that he had kissed the hand instead; an elderly woman ought to be content with a calm, assured, faithful affection, and let beautiful youngsters have the frills. That evening, she planned a dinner carefully to his liking, and she would not let herself be disappointed when he brought a political magnate, who talked politics, from the terrapin to the coffee. She smiled again, as she thought how much more of interest she would have found in the conversation, to-day, after the club's year on Our Colonial Policies. This last anniversary Darius had clean forgotten. In fact, he had advised her to go to the Federation meeting; saying, lightly, that it came at an opportune moment because he must be away that week, himself. "Milwaukee is a pretty city," he ended amiably, "and there will be lots of hen-functions and you'll enjoy yourself; but what's the object of it all, your Federation?"

"I don't know"—she astonished him with her frank levity—"when I do, I'll tell you."

"Well, don't get into any rows you can help," said he easily; "want any more money? Got plenty?"

"Plenty, thank you," said she, "although I am

THE OBJECT OF THE FEDERATION

going to be rather extravagant and get some very smart toilets."

He looked over his glasses at her; and she was not able to decipher his smile. Didn't he approve of her clothes? She sent her fine eyes into the mirror of her dressing-table, after he had gone, and studied the picture there with a frown and a smile, at last with a moisture over her eyes.

But, although he said nothing, when she next examined her bank-book she found her credit larger. "Maybe he *does* like my spending more money on my gowns," she thought.

She went to Milwaukee. She did not remind him of the anniversary. She said to herself that she would seriously try to discover the object of the Federation; then she would tell Darius. Her daughter-in-law accompanied her, and her daughter was to meet her. "Quite a family party," said her son; "well, I hope you girls will have a good lark! And, I say, Hester, find out what it's all about—if you can!"

At first, Myrtle Hardy was more bewildered than excited. The scene was unlike anything in her experience. The hotels glittering with feminine finery

STORIES THAT END WELL

and humming with feminine voices; the placards over doorways in rotundas or corridors, announcing headquarters; the vast crooning bulk of the lake, the iridescent gleam of water that came to one in glimpses as one was whirled down the wide and breeze-swept avenues, amid a dazzle of lovely fabrics and smiling faces, blooming like flowers in swiftly passing Victorias or rattling cabs, or rippling over the sidewalks into the wide vestibules where Milwaukee welcomed her guests; the noisy rush of the city; the ceaseless rattle and clang of the electric-cars which were like an orchestral accompaniment to the magnetic excitement pulsing under the decorous calm of the meetings, in the flower-decked theaters, or eddying through the foyer; these at first dazed the woman unused to clubs. But only for a brief time. Presently, she began to be consulted; her advice was asked; she made a speech in a meeting of the state delegation. There was, in the speech, her natural clear sense—which goes for something always and everywhere—there was, also, the mark in voice and speech and pose, of her years' training with the teachers. “I believe you could be heard all right, in the theater,” said the president

THE OBJECT OF THE FEDERATION

of the state delegation, afterward, "will you make a motion or two for us, this afternoon?" She made the motions; and, strangely enough, she wasn't so frightened as she had been in the state delegation; in fact, she proposed a simple short cut through an unnecessary dilemma with not much feeling beyond wonderment that so many clever women could get themselves into such a tangle. The applause and delight of her companions of the delegation touched her. "I'm in it, again," she thought, railing at her own vanity, but curiously pleased. Now, her thoughts were back, groping through the years when she was not "in it." Not the days of her youth, not at all; she had been the leader of her mates, an ingenuous, tolerant, easy-going leader, admired and loved, shining among them by right of two years in an eastern boarding-school and a trip to Europe.

Not in her early married life, either; although, at first, Darius was poor and the great wagon manufactory was but a daring experiment. In those days she knew all her husband's hopes and plans as well as his troubles. He used to say, often, that she had a good business head. Those days they lived in a little brown wooden house with a five-foot piazza;

STORIES THAT END WELL

and Darius mowed the tiny lawn himself; and she put up her own preserves and made all the children's clothes—pretty clothes they were, too; she was a housewife whose praise was in all the churches. But it does not follow that she had ceased to be a leader, far from it; she was the president of the "Ladies' Sewing Society" of her church; and of the first woman's club, classically named the "Clonian." She was a progressive spirit; she it was who introduced the regular motion into the business meetings; before her reign it having been the artless custom of the societies to talk until the discussion either languished or grew too violent, when some promoter of harmony would call out, "Let us put it to vote," whereupon there would be a few timid ayes and a self-respecting silence instead of no; and the measure would be adopted. Pertaining to this custom was an inevitable sequel of plaintive criticism from all the modest souls who "didn't like to speak," but who were full of foreboding wisdom. Myrtle Hardy was one of the few who could speak; and she was considered to speak very much to the point. Those days, she was keenly interested in all the life of a young, hopeful, bustling little western city. She belonged

THE OBJECT OF THE FEDERATION

to a musical society and would rise at five in the morning to practice, and she was one of an anxious band of women who had bought a library and were running an amateur entertainment bureau to support it. Then, Darrie was in home-made knickerbockers; Myrtie was a sweet, little, loving hoyden who was her mother's despair because she would climb trees in her white frocks; Ralph was a baby, and the two little girls that died were their mother's tiny helpers, with the willingest little hands and feet. Sitting there in the crowded and noisy theater, a quiver ran over the mother's face. Her friends had forgotten, the brothers and sisters had forgotten, even Darius seemed to forget; but, day and night, she remembered the eager little faces, lighting so happily at her praise, the shining little heads that used to nestle against her heart. The two died of scarlet fever in one terrible week. In that week, the first gray threads had crept into Myrtle Hardy's beautiful brown hair. She was nurse and comforter and helper, then, to Darius. She felt her eyes cloud with the vision of him, as he flung himself on the babies' little bed, sobbing in the terrible, racking passion of a man's grief. "Not now, dear, not now, not till the

STORIES THAT END WELL

others are safe," she had whispered; "we have them still; they need us."

She wondered was it after the babies went that she began to drop out of things. Somehow she was so busy comforting Darius and nursing the others back to health, and crowding back her own ceaseless grief out of sight; and thinking of cheerful things to say and new interests for the others, that the library passed out of corporate existence and into endowed rest with hardly a thought from her. Nearly at the same time, the musical society perished in a cataclysm, due to the sensitive musical temperament, and the literary society died of inanition, after browsing through literature from Milton to Dante; and after each member had written one or two papers, thus sating the natural curiosity of the other members. Myrtle did not lift a hand to save either of the societies. She heard the wrathful accusations of the musical warriors, and put in the unappreciated word for peace, but did not resent its failure. She consoled the literary mourners with the reflection that they could read up about things in the magazines or the books of the new library; and masked her secret listlessness with perfunctory regret. Long after, she

THE OBJECT OF THE FEDERATION

came to wonder whether it was not she who went into prison, then; rather than the world that left her on one side. Did she not gently but rigidly exclude the friends who would have called upon her and shut herself apart with her own? Continually, she used to pray for cheerfulness, for patience; but it never occurred to her to pray for interest. When other societies were formed, she did not care to join them; she followed her own advice and read apart by herself. By and by, although so much more of a personage, she was no longer beset with invitations. The younger women organized a new club with new methods; and Myrtle Hardy read her books, peacefully, on her wide piazzas, amid her plants and flowers. When Myrtie came back from college, Darius asked her wasn't she going to help Myrtie by joining the club with her?

"Dear, no," said she, blithely, "they are all so young."

"Why don't you get up a club of your own, then, and take in the other left outs?" said he.

"I don't fancy women's clubs much; you know I did belong to them; they are half-baked things, and they take their own improvement with such deadly

STORIES THAT END WELL

seriousness. And it is such a smattering that you get in them. A smattering is always forgotten; unless you know a lot about a thing you forget it all."

"Oh, well, you know best what you like," said Darius, easily; "I only thought you seemed a little dull." He dropped the subject; but she repeated his words, often to herself; he never had thought her dull, before. She noticed that Myrtie did not talk of her club. She was puzzled. Outwardly, Myrtie was a handsome young woman with a highbred repose of manner which she had acquired as a college editor and the protector of new girls; inwardly, she was still shy, desperately in dread of awkwardness, and brimming with enthusiasms. Not until she was about to be married did her mother find a trace of her little girl in this gently haughty young creature. And, then, there remained only Myrtie's last photographs and Myrtie's empty chamber, and the weekly letters for her mother's hungry heart. "I am not sure I know her," she would often muse, those days, "I am only sure she doesn't know me!"

Myrtie lived in Chicago; she had married very well indeed; and had a prosperous husband who was a graduate of Harvard and dallied with reform;

THE OBJECT OF THE FEDERATION

and there were two sweet little children who called Mrs. Hardy "Granny"; and Myrtie always consulted her mother when they were ill; she was a devoted daughter. "When my dear mother was alive," said Mrs. Hardy, smiling rather grimly, "grannies were not very nice old cronies who smoked pipes in the chimney corner; and 'Grandma' was good enough for any grandmother; now, 'Grandma' is provincial and *I* am a granny, myself. It is a little puzzling."

The children were all out of the house, now. Ralph, the youngest, was at college; she was well acquainted with him; she used to write him about the books she read and he wrote her about the boys and football; she knew a great deal about football. She lived in a stately new colonial house with quaint little window-panes wherever they would not obstruct the view, and snowy tiled bath-rooms, such as no colonial ever knew; and terraces decked with pink and blue hydrangeas; and dazzling window gardens. Myrtie had been as kind as possible about the house; and Myrtie's taste was charming; it had been an education in colonial history as well as architecture to have Myrtie help build the house; even the

STORIES THAT END WELL

architect was deferential to her. Across the street was Darrie's less costly but no less correctly charming house. Hester had done Myrtie's architectural bidding, also. Darrie was the best of sons. She was proud of him; and his father depended more and more on him. She loved his wife; and his children were her vivid delight. Darrie used to fetch her flowers and new plants for the window gardens; and tell her about the children's funny sayings. Darius, her husband, grew kinder and more generous all the time; he gave her a check-book of her own; she told her old friends that she had the best husband and children in the world; and that she was a grateful woman; she duly remembered her abundant mercies in her prayers; and yet—and yet she began to feel herself retired. A most respectable position, that of a retired officer; but, somehow, generals and admirals do not covet it. Nor did Myrtle Hardy. She had been in the center of her own stage; now she felt herself most gently, most civilly, pushed into the wings. Her daughter-in-law, with all her admiration and her dutiful respect, had interests which she never discussed; had a point of view and ideals which were outside her comprehension. She felt

THE OBJECT OF THE FEDERATION

fatigued and puzzled when she heard the younger generation's familiar speech with itself. "I am not in it," she said to herself. Darius, too, no longer consulted her; the old fashion of confidence had somehow slipped away; he had not very much to say when they were alone; and he was beginning to call her "Mother." Myrtle Hardy considered. She thought for weeks and thought hard. She sat in her sewing-room, up-stairs, where were the only two rocking-chairs that Myrtie's impeccable taste had allowed to abide in the house. She sat first in one and then in the other of the chairs, her needlework unheeded in her lap; and watched her little grandson and his sister playing while the nurse made an interminable German lace on the back porch; and just across from her window, Hester, her daughter-in-law, sat amid a heap of books, reading and making notes. "That child has been studying for three months, every spare moment, on her paper about 'Scientific Plumbing in the Modern Mansion.'" Mrs. Hardy muttered, with a frown, "well, I hope she will know something, if she keeps her mind! That was not the way we prepared club papers in my day; we decided on our subjects one meeting and

STORIES THAT END WELL

we read our essays on them the next; and two weeks was enough for us; now, they spend a half year making a programme and have it hanging over them a year in advance." She watched her daughter-in-law, smiling grimly; then, suddenly, she rose, with the motion of one who has come to a decision. "At least they are not superficial, nowadays," she said, "and perhaps it is better to take one's self too seriously than not seriously enough. And after all, Hester did find out what was the matter with the laundry faucets."

One day she told her daughter-in-law that she wanted to join a class in parliamentary law.

"But we haven't any," objected Mrs. Darius Hardy, Jr., meekly.

"Then get up one," said the one time president of clubs. "Get all you can to join a class, send for a teacher, and I will make up the deficit, in the subscription list."

A parliamentary teacher of renown came. She was also a teacher of expression—that was her poetical word. Hester caught her breath the first time her mother-in-law rose in the class to "speak to the motion." She embraced her with beaming eyes and

THE OBJECT OF THE FEDERATION

the prettiest rose of delight on her cheeks. "Oh, how did you learn it?" she sighed, happily, "you are the best of us all!"

"I took some private lessons in Chicago," said Mrs. Hardy—her quiet manner did not betray an unexpected thrill.

"*You're beautiful!*" cried Hester.

After that, Hester always seconded her mother-in-law's motions; and fought in the mimic debates as valiantly on her side as a natural reticence would let her. It was odd (to Mrs. Hardy) what a different relation grew up between them; a sense of comradeship and the pleasures of partisanship, wherein it is not only the leader who exults in the winning fray, the follower has a simpler and a nobler joy. The first natural consequence of Hester's admiration was that she begged her mother-in-law to join her club. Before the end of the year, Mrs. Hardy was elected president of the club; before the end of the next year, she was burrowing in books and magazines, as absorbed as Hester, in the conduct of Great Britain to her colonies. She found herself suddenly interested in the newspapers; Dar-

STORIES THAT END WELL

rie talked politics with her; and they were no longer unintelligible.

"Whew, isn't mother getting cultivated!" Darius whispered to his boy; and they both grinned.

"She's growing handsomer, too," said Darius the younger.

"I hope she won't go to any of those fakirs in the newspapers who paint you all over, so's you crack when you laugh," commented Darius, anxiously, "and, say, Darrie, there's a way they have, nowadays, of burning off your skin and giving you a new skin—they call it being '*done over*'; it must be frightful torture—I'm not going to have your mother's face sizzled up, that fashion."

"She doesn't need it; mother's skin is lovely," said the loyal son.

"Her not needing it is no reason why she won't want it—being a woman—Darrie. Your mother is the most sensible woman in the world, Darrie; but she's a woman. And I'm not sure whether a woman ought to monkey with her age, the way mother is doing. What do you suppose I saw with my own eyes, yesterday? There was mother, swinging her arms over her head and bowing like a heathen

THE OBJECT OF THE FEDERATION

Chinee, until her slender fingers touched the floor; and then she went to kicking over the chairs—high kicks!"

"Oh, that's only Delsarte—they only do that to limber up and make themselves graceful. Hetty can kick the chandelier."

Myrtle caught echoes of this conversation; and was base enough to listen behind her sewing-room curtains, giving no sign. It was true that a change had come over her, and that her mirror reflected smarter toilets, a different carriage, and a fresher charm. For one reason, she looked younger because she was much more cheerful. "I am a child with a new toy," she would say to herself. But there is no question that she found a pungent enjoyment in her new activity. One of the perpetual wonders of life is how small a figure the stake cuts in the game. It is infinitely more exciting to make money, for example, than to have it. To keep our souls in repair they need exercise; and the vicissitudes, the emotions, the excitement of a career, happily do not depend on the size of the stage. The great stake, the large stage, count; but they count less than their claims. What comes to more than the pomp of suc-

STORIES THAT END WELL

cess (as the vulgar name an intangible thing) is the elation of using all one's powers; nor is there any tawdry applause comparable to the rich and fine content of accomplishment. But often Myrtle caught Darius's pondering eyes and wondered to herself what he was thinking. Really, Darius was experiencing the rather piquant emotions of a man who discovers an entirely new creature in his own wife. By a natural transition his thoughts went back to the days when he was courting Myrtle Danforth, and "couldn't make her out;" by an equally natural process of selection, he fumbled through dim passages in his soul, striving to see the relation between this assured and graceful woman of affairs and the joyous young beauty that he had won, the high-hearted comrade of his poverty and struggles, the tender comforter of his sorrows. A hundred little trivial, affecting incidents rose out of the hazy years to gripe his heart. He felt a novel shyness, however; and the only token of his feelings (outside the check-book) was a habit he had fallen into of watching his wife when she was not looking.

Of course, she was aware of it; she was thinking of it at this moment, while the Massachusetts wom-

THE OBJECT OF THE FEDERATION

an behind her unpacked her conscience on her nearest Indiana neighbor.

"And how does Indiana stand?" said the evangelist, finally.

"Well, if you ask *me*," said the Indianian, wearily, "we have troubles of our own; and we are not thinking much about it!"

At this, her companion (also from Massachusetts, but with a sense of humor), giggled and essayed to cover her indecorum by asking Mrs. Hardy if she had attended the industrial sessions. "I have tried to go to them," she confessed, later, after they had become confidential. "My husband is a manufacturer, and I was anxious to see whether they would try to get light on the questions that they are tackling, or would simply form an opinion beforehand and talk about it."

"Well, how did they strike you?"

"They didn't strike me at all; I went to two of them; but the first one, two southern acquaintances of mine lured me out into a committee-room, to tell me the dreadful things Massachusetts was going to do about the color question—not one of which had entered our heads, by the way—and the other meet-

STORIES THAT END WELL

ing, I sat back in the hall and couldn't hear anything, and a Massachusetts friend came in, very calm but deeply excited, and got me out in the hall to tell me the plots of the Georgia delegation. Between them, I didn't hear a word of the industrial question. I'm told Missouri has been studying preventive legislation in regard to woman and child labor for the last year; what did they decide to recommend?"

"Well," said Mrs. Hardy, drily, "you see they were studying for a *year*; if they had taken the subject for a month or two, no doubt they would have had opinions; but as it was, they didn't recommend anything. But what you say about the sessions made me think. I find that there are two classes of delegates, those who are interested in the meetings and those who simply go to the meetings to get a better chance to pull wires. It makes me more at sea than ever about the object of the federation. What do *you* think it is?"

The Massachusetts woman meditated. She was a handsome woman, a woman with ancestors, it was evident, for the blue and gold of the Colonial Dames badge, and the enamel star and scarlet ribbon of the

THE OBJECT OF THE FEDERATION

Order of Colonial Governors illuminated the white chiffon of her bodice; and there were five bars on the scarlet ribbon. "My idea of the object is simply that it is a clearing-house," said she; "and so far it is democratic, for it brings us all together; and I," said the descendant of governors and warriors, "*I'm* democratic. Look at us. It is not only that we represent so many different classes, we represent so many sections of the country. In fact, about this color question, I feel that it is more important for the north and the south to get acquainted and friendly, working together, than it is for us to give the opportunities of the federation to a few colored people."

"I don't look at it that way, it is a question of right and wrong"—thus the ardent soul from Massachusetts unfurled her banner to the breeze—"are you going to do what is right or what is expedient?" The smouldering fire which had made the deck hot walking all through the meetings, showed signs of breaking out of cover; everybody in hearing craned her neck; there were murmurs of approval and polite sniffings of dissent to the right and to the left. The Massachusetts woman said

STORIES THAT END WELL

"Life is a compromise;" and shrugged her shoulders. Mrs. Hardy put up the white flag in a mild sentence: "Mrs. Lowe is calling us to order, I think."

The convention had passed safely to the ballot. The opposition had sprung its mines; and the regulars had discharged their heavy artillery behind the proper parliamentary subterfuges. The undecided voters had, as usual, asked to take back their ballots, and as usual had been refused. The excitement had risen until it showed in white or flushed faces and strained voices, in clapping, and hisses; but the chairman's inscrutable calm never changed, and through it all she held the convention perfectly in hand.

Two men had safely run the gauntlet of ticket takers, and were seated in the lower gallery. They were a middle-aged man, dark, portly, carefully dressed in silver-gray tweeds, with a silk shirt; and a young man, dark, slender, in a lighter suit, with a stiff white collar on his pink negligee shirt. There was an air of distinction about both men; they looked to be men of importance in their own locality, men accustomed to command and deference; but

THE OBJECT OF THE FEDERATION

nothing of gentler modesty and meekness than their demeanor can be imagined. They shrank back in their seats and sat close to each other, as one will observe timid children sitting, who have wandered into a strange house.

"You—you don't suppose they will put us out? eh, Darrie?" said the elder, in a low voice, "not now?"

"Of course not," responded Darrie, with simulated lightness; "look there to the left, there's Myrtie. That president is a good presiding officer; you would not guess all this row is over her, she's absolutely impartial—by Jove!"

"What's the matter? Do you see mother anywhere?"

"No, sir; did you catch that, the secretary's explanation of the parliamentary question? Pretty clear, I call it; but they're getting in all their points, I observe, working questions of privilege for all they are worth."

"Very clever, very clever," assented Darius; "there's Hester, mother isn't with *her*; you don't suppose mother would stay away, this afternoon?"

"Never; this is the election afternoon."

STORIES THAT END WELL

"Myrtie said mother was very much admired and sought after, lots of invitations ; maybe she has gone out to some tea—"

"They wouldn't have anything this afternoon ; don't you see how keyed up they all are?"

"I thought I was monstrous clever planning all this," pursued Darius, with a knitted brow ; "your mother forgot this was our anniversary, but I didn't ; I have her present in my pocket ; and the dinner ordered ; and I was expecting to surprise her ; but if she isn't here—she couldn't have gone *home*?"

"Of course not—there she is, don't you see her ? looking fresh as paint!"

A lady had risen, her voice, mellow and clear, dove through the sonorous buzz of the hall.

"Why it's *mother*!" cried Darius, "and if she isn't taking an appeal from the chair; mother has her nerve with her, to-day."

Darrie grinned ; but as he watched his father's face kindle, his own changed ; he laid his hand on his father's, nodding, softly : "I tell you, mother's *great*," said he.

"That little dark-eyed lady is speaking on mother's side"—Darius was leaning forward with ex-

THE OBJECT OF THE FEDERATION

cited interest—"isn't she a pretty creature, she's little—but, oh my! How clearly she puts it; these southerners have a natural gift of oratory. Don't think much of that woman who's trying to call mother down!"

He was as eager as a boy, the man whose cool head and hard sense had won him a great fortune; his eyes glistened, the color crept into his cheek; and he drew a long sigh when the appeal was withdrawn. "Very pretty, Darrie," he said, "appeal withdrawn, but they have got in their work on the voters; chairman had to decide against her own friends, and did it like a Roman soldier. The extraordinary thing to me, Darrie, is how well they are all keeping their temper. Darrie, didn't you think mother's voice was good when she spoke; how'd she learn to speak so well?"

"Oh, she took lessons," returned Darrie, easily; "Hester got her into them; Hester and mother are great pals."

"I know; Hester's a remarkable girl, Darrie; she has always appreciated your mother. Begun again, have they? Started something else while the ballots are counted. Like a continuous show, isn't it?"

STORIES THAT END WELL

He listened with a slackened zest while the questions of reorganization and details of the duties of chairmen pattered through the hour, the rain after the thunder-storm. Then, unexpectedly, Mrs. Hardy made her little speech. It was an excellent little speech, good-natured, full of sense, and with a dash of humor. At first, she was a little nervous, but she was too interested in her subject to be nervous more than an instant. Had she known of the presence of two auditors in the gallery, perhaps her composure had wavered. There could be no doubt regarding their agitation. They turned pale and clutched each other; then, first on Darrie's, next on his father's features, dawning and spread a light of exceeding confidence; with shameless effrontery—considering their relationship—they stimulated the applause; they beamed over the hits; and at the close they were radiant. Without a word Darius held out his hand to his son, who wrung it. Then, they both took a long, long breath of relief and satisfaction. Darius was the first to speak: "My son," said he, "I have known your mother for forty years and have been her husband for thirty-three, but she can surprise me still!"

THE OBJECT OF THE FEDERATION

"Mother certainly *is* great," assented Darrie, solemnly; he added his own little feather of marital triumph: "Hetty always told me so," said he.

"Look at those women all around her," said Darius, "patting her on the shoulder and whispering; *they* know. Darrie, I'll bet you anything, there hasn't been another speech in this convention that has put things as clearly as mother's."

Myrtle started when she saw her husband and son smiling in the doorway. Her daughter-in-law was on one side, her daughter on the other, half a dozen of her delegation radiated complacency in her wake. "Hasn't she covered us with glory?" one of the followers called, gleefully to another. And a little din of compliments fell upon Darius' ears. It is pleasant to reflect that all over the hall similar groups were exulting unselfishly over their own prowess and their own heroines. Little did Darius Hardy concern himself with them. He took his wife under his arm with a proud and blissful smile. He waved a direction at Darrie: "You take the girls, Darrie, you'll find a cab, somewhere; I want your mother to myself. Now, Myrtle, if sated vanity can

STORIES THAT END WELL

demand any more, I'll give it to you in the carriage!"

A few minutes later, she was gazing, through a happy mist, at the gems on her heart-shaped locket, murmuring: "And I thought you had forgotten the day. And you planning this lovely, lovely surprise for me. Oh, I am so glad, Dar, I didn't know you were there, I couldn't have said a *word!* Did I—were you—was it *passable?*"

"You're fishing!" chuckled he; and he kissed her hand. But he whispered in her ear; and she blushed like a young girl.

Presently he laughed. "By the way, Myrtle, you haven't told me! Have you discovered what is the object of the federation?"

"Certainly," said she, "I don't know what it is for others, but in my case it is to help me find myself—and my husband!"

THE LITTLE LONELY GIRL

THE golf links were picturesque; spreading along the shore or climbing through the heart of the island set in the great river; here and there a vista of the huge bulk of the arsenal-shops; walled over the river by the hills behind opulent, bustling little cities, the fair greens jeweled by the sun and dappled with shadow from trees older than the Louisiana Purchase. A breeze shifted the shadows. Willy Butler felt its touch on his wet forehead.

He half turned to take out his handkerchief. In the act he saw her. It was the same girl who had followed the course yesterday. She was alone, just as she had been alone yesterday.

The gallery was bobbing like the crest of a wave over the brow of the hill; the carriages and machines glittered in slow pomp after the rope, while the favorites and their caddies marched over the slope toward the bunkers. But Willy and Dickson had only this one follower, a little lonely figure, slim and

STORIES THAT END WELL

straight and nimble, in white linen, whose brown arms and brown face against her dazzling gown made the effect of a Russian eikon minus the gold-incrusted robe. She halted when Willy halted. With impersonal interest she watched Dickson make a strike. At the clean, beautiful drive she nodded approval. Then her black brows met in a slightly worried frown. Willy, club in hand, was aware of the frown. He was aware—in a sort of subconscious way—that she wanted him to play well; and he was acutely aware that he had not played well this afternoon. Even his direction, which had always been his best ally, had not kept its form. Twice had he gone into the rough, losing a shot each time, despite his really hair-raising recoveries. Now the other man was two up, with only four more holes to play. At best Willy could but halve this hole, at best, with a perfect approach and a long putt. "A duffer at golf, like everything else!" ran his own bitter comment to himself. He didn't know why he looked up; swinging his club for a trial stroke on a leaf. Look he did, however, to catch the dark eyes of the little lonely girl intently watching him. If she had called to him aloud "Brace up!"

THE LITTLE LONELY GIRL

he couldn't have heard the words more distinctly. He almost thought he did hear them, and gave the child an involuntary, half-starved smile.

With the same smile on his lips he sent a faultless approach into easy putting distance, and he felt absurdly pleased because she clapped her hands. They halved the hole. Dickson, the Harvard champion, looked bored as he sank on the bench by the red water-cooler. He had been Willy's classmate a year ago at college, knowing him as the man who makes all the best societies and "leads the life" may know the recluse who makes none; he was conscious of a certain irritation peppering his cool superiority. To think of the millions that shuffling, cowed-looking, insignificant chap would have, while he, Dickson, had to slave on a salary. A duffer who couldn't even win a golf game that belonged to him, because he was rattled! Dickson felt that the ways of Fate were scandalous.

Willy had limped up. The day before he had blistered his heel somehow, and every step cost a pang. He eased the lame foot by resting his weight on the other. His gray-blue eyes, which only his dead mother had ever found handsome, scanned with a

STORIES THAT END WELL

certain wistfulness Dickson's graceful, athletic figure and clean, dark profile. His own profile was irregular and his figure was awkward, with arms too long and shoulders too square for harmony; he stooped in an ungainly fashion, as if he had the habit of musing as he walked; his plain face was deeply freckled. Yet as there was a suggestion of strength in the figure, so there was the same suggestion in the young mouth and chin, and something clear and strangely innocent, for a young man, looked out of his eyes. As he stood, every muscle seemed to sag; he appeared utterly spent; but the instant Dickson had driven he stepped alertly into his place and sent a drive like a bird sailing far beyond Dickson's dot of white on the green. Somehow a new uplift of energy and hope had come to him; bless that kid, he would show her that he could still do something with the sticks! He heard her whispered, unconscious "*Beauty!*" This time he kept his head straight, but when the hole was won, he met her smile frankly with another. The next hole was easy. He had steadied; he had his nerve back; every calculation worked; and when Dickson stymied, it was a simple trick (the like of which he had

THE LITTLE LONELY GIRL

practiced often) to hop over the ball and roll into the hole, to the artless joy of his caddy. "You're going to be the champeen," this worthy told Willy when they trudged on; "guess that young lady's a mascot."

"I guess she is," said Willy. He was sure of it when at the home hole, guarded by a high hedge, Dickson's ball was sliced into the stubborn net of osage-orange roots. When his own ball sailed cleanly over the wall he made an excuse of tying his shoe in order to get another view of "that kid's" brilliant smile. The girl herself went on to the bench in sight of the blackboard. Here she found herself beside an elderly man with a great head of thick gray hair. He was clapping so vigorously that she took him to be Willy's father, and sent him a glance of sympathy. "You been all 'round with him?" said he. "What sort of a game is he playing?"

"Pretty bad until the fifteenth, and then a wonder," she returned calmly.

"Rattled!" he snorted in disgust, as he chewed his cigar out of shape. "First match game. How are the others? What's his chance?"

"He can beat them all if he will only think so,"

STORIES THAT END WELL

she returned in the same even tone. Her voice was fuller, with a different and more melodious intonation than those about him; he looked up at her quickly, as if from a passing sense of the difference.

"Yes, he's rattled!" grunted the elderly gentleman. "Gone stale, practicing every minute. Too anxious. Wants to please his father by getting a little silverware."

"Aren't you his father?"

"*Me?* No. His father could buy me up out of his pocket-money. His father is Hiram G. Butler. I'm only his boss. He's learning the steel business with me. I wish I *was* his father; he's a genius in his way."

"I suppose his father is awfully proud of him."

"Proud nothing!" exploded the stout gentleman. "His father has bought and sold and fought inventors so long that when he discovered that his son was hatching formulas for open-hearth steel he was disgusted. Then at college Will took honors in chemistry and was a grind; and when his father wanted to load him with money, and told him to go ahead and make all the societies, he sent the money back and said he didn't know any boys in societies;

THE LITTLE LONELY GIRL

the boys who ran after him were only after his money and the other boys didn't want him. The trouble simply is he is too all-fired shy and modest. Takes has father's word he is a failure because he couldn't make their fool societies. How should a fellow who has spent his life in English schools and traveling about with a tutor, and then is dumped into Harvard, be expected to make a splash among those snippy young swells? Harvard's no violet cold-frame! The other boys did, but they were chips of the old block, hard as nails and hustlers from 'way back. And since his mother died this poor chap has had nobody to chirk him up. Father didn't mind until the other boys died. All three in one year; pretty tough on their father. Pretty tough. Ever lose—ur-r!—any one in your family? Then you know. Now Willy's the only child, and his father wants to make him over in his brothers' image. Wants to give him a wife to help! And Willy so scared of a petticoat he walked two hours up and down before the Somerset Hotel at his first college dance trying to screw up courage to go in—and couldn't. Hiram never will get over that. But Willy, though he won't marry to please his father,

STORIES THAT END WELL

is fond of the old dictator just the same. And mighty proud. That's why he has worked so at golf. Trying to show he can do some things like other boys, you see. Well, I see that Harvard dude has got his ball on the green at last. Now it's up to Willy— Didn't I tell you? In all right! Shall— Oh!" It was a singularly small, soft "Oh!" which the elderly man uttered, and it slipped out of his rugged lips when he caught the shy flash from Willy's eyes at the girl. He studied her an infinitesimal space before he spoke, and he turned a chuckle into a cough as he said, "Aren't you Lady Jean Bruce-Hadden and aren't you visiting the Brookes?"

She said that she was, rather indifferently, her gaze still following Willy, who was accepting Dickson's congratulations less awkwardly than was his wont.

"I guess Major Brooke has told you about me, Jabez Rivers—"

But ere he could finish the name, she had held out her hand with a kindling face, crying, "Oh, indeed, yes. I'm ever so glad to meet you, Mr. Rivers."

After this it was only natural to present Willy; but it was a bit of a surprise to have Willy, when

THE LITTLE LONELY GIRL

presented, say, "This is my mascot, sir. I lost the game and she made me win it."

Willy was astonished at his own fluency; but then he had thought Lady Jean a very young girl, not quite the "kid" that he had styled her, but still hardly a young lady. Then, anyhow, she was different. Oh, *very* different!

His friend was eying him critically, with queer little grunts, according to his fashion. "You're not fit to walk," he grumbled. "Why *will* young folks wear shoes that don't fit! Say, you take Lady Jean home while I go over to the club-house with the major. And keep the car if you don't find me. I'll go back with Standish. And—I don't know but you better take her 'round the head of the island and show her that motor mowing-machine—lawn-mower, you know; I want her to see it."

He grinned as the young people obeyed him with grateful docility, speeding away in his electric run-about; and bestowed a look of orphic sagacity upon the officer in white undress uniform who had joined him. The officer was younger than Rivers, although not young.

"That is one of the very finest little ladies in the world," he remarked.

STORIES THAT END WELL

is fond of the old dictator just the same. And mighty proud. That's why he has worked so at golf. Trying to show he can do some things like other boys, you see. Well, I see that Harvard dude has got his ball on the green at last. Now it's up to Willy— Didn't I tell you? In all right! Shall— Oh!" It was a singularly small, soft "Oh!" which the elderly man uttered, and it slipped out of his rugged lips when he caught the shy flash from Willy's eyes at the girl. He studied her an infinitesimal space before he spoke, and he turned a chuckle into a cough as he said, "Aren't you Lady Jean Bruce-Hadden and aren't you visiting the Brookes?"

She said that she was, rather indifferently, her gaze still following Willy, who was accepting Dickson's congratulations less awkwardly than was his wont.

"I guess Major Brooke has told you about me, Jabez Rivers—"

But ere he could finish the name, she had held out her hand with a kindling face, crying, "Oh, indeed, yes. I'm ever so glad to meet you, Mr. Rivers."

After this it was only natural to present Willy; but it was a bit of a surprise to have Willy, when

THE LITTLE LONELY GIRL

presented, say, "This is my mascot, sir. I lost the game and she made me win it."

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STORIES THAT END WELL

"Why not beat Cleaves and get the big cup?" said she in the same cool tone. "You can if you will. You know perfectly well you can. Promise me you will."

"Here and now?" said Willy, smiling faintly, but the light in her eyes struck a glint in his own. "Done," he added, holding out his hand. Her clasp was cool and soft, but as firm and frank as a boy's.

"And now," said she, "where's your lawnmower?"

They had reached the head of the island, where there was a beautifully shaven sweep of lawn, but no vestige of mower; Willy's pulses beat a thought faster, and he felt himself a master of stratagem when he suggested their searching for it in an impossible locality at the farther end of the island. He found that she could talk as well about other things as golf. There was no froth in her talk, but she was very witty; Willy, who passed for an abnormally serious young fellow, laughed several times. He confessed to her that it was more like talking to a boy than to a girl to talk to her. "I've always wanted to be a boy," she laughed. "You can play I am one, if you like."

THE LITTLE LONELY GIRL

"But I'm afraid you would miss the pretty speeches, and all that."

"I never had any," she answered, with her flashing smile. "Maybe when I'm presented I shall have if we have enough money next year to have me come out. But I don't believe I shall. If you had four sisters all raving beauties and tremendously fetching, and you couldn't even sing a song, do nothing but ride and play tennis—well, you wouldn't expect pretty speeches!"

"Why not? You are pretty, too. You—"

She stopped him with a raised finger and a shrug of her shoulders. He wondered why he had never noticed before what lovely lines pertain to girls' shoulders and how daintily their little heads are set on their smooth olive throats. "Plain truth, you know," said she; "we're playing being two boys."

To save the situation he went on precipitately, "I dare say I know, though. I never was lucky enough to have a sister, but as I had three brothers who did everything I can't do, I know how it feels to—to be out of it."

"But you understand my sisters are splendid and no end nice to me."

STORIES THAT END WELL

"So were my brothers," said Willy loyally.

She looked at him with a quick sympathy. "I know," she murmured. "Mr. Rivers told me. And all in one year. It must have been dreadful."

"Yes, it was. But it was worse when my mother died."

"Oh, yes. I was sixteen when my mother died. And I miss her so now. Don't you?"

"Yes. I was fifteen."

They were both silent. The weight of their piteous memories was on both young hearts, and yet in each was a sense of companionship, of the sympathy of a common pain. The tears gathered slowly in the girl's eyes; she put her hand up her sleeve, but withdrew it empty, and the young man, taking out his own handkerchief, which had surely seen hard usage, looked disconsolately on it before tendering the freshest corner. "It's pretty mussed, but I lost the others," he apologized.

"And you have pockets, too! I lose handkerchiefs to an appalling extent."

"So do I." It was wonderful how many things they had in common—thoughts, opinions, most delightfully human of all, faults. He felt emboldened

THE LITTLE LONELY GIRL

to say that it must be a great comfort to have a sister; he had always wanted one.

"They're a good deal of a nuisance, most boys think," said she, "but I don't know why. I know I shouldn't have been a nuisance to my brothers and I should rather like to have had one. We might have been pals."

His eyes sparkled; he felt that he was about to make a proposal as daring as it was original; but he made it, clutching the lever under his hand more firmly in his agitation, yet not hesitating. "If we are going to play things, why not play you are my sister? It would be easier than being two boys. You see I should all the time be afraid of forgetting somehow and saying something unbecoming, or too rough, if we played you were a boy."

She had more sense of humor than he, although she was scarcely less innocent; she laughed, saying, "Most boys are rough enough to their sisters. Besides, I don't know you well enough."

"You know me better than any one in the world does," he answered gravely. Their young eyes met and darted away. He thought how lovely her eyes were. Not so much in color or form, perhaps, but

STORIES THAT END WELL

in expression. He wished that he could see them that way again. But she had turned away. He was worried lest he might unwittingly have offended her. He knew (for his French tutor had told him) how easy it is for a man to blunder clumsily into a woman's fine reserves and sensitive modesty; it was a great relief to have her turn swiftly toward him again and smile as she said, "But *you* don't know *me!*"

"Maybe not; I'm asking you to give me the chance."

"Oh! Is that why? Just to amuse you."

"You know better," said he, "for at least you know *me!*"

"That was disagreeable of me," she admitted penitently. "I do know better. Please forgive me!"

"Then you will play it?" he said eagerly. "You know I did what you wanted. I promised to win the cup."

His first gleam of masterful daring did not displease the girl; possibly, it obscurely gratified her. "But you must be good and win," she said, conceding the point in the immemorial feminine fashion

THE LITTLE LONELY GIRL

which would always march out of a surrendered keep with flags flying.

"I will be good and win," repeated Willy obediently.

There fell a little silence, during which they had glimpses of soft green woods, of distant harvest-fields and of the shimmer of sunlit waves. Vagrant odors of new-mown hay were wafted to them when the breeze stirred. An oriole's note rose out of the dim forest paths, poignantly sweet. Presently the lad spoke, not so much frightened at his own audacity as amazed at his lack of fear. "Since you are playing my sister, do you mind telling me your name? Did he say Buchanan?"

"No; Bruce-Hadden."

His face lighted as he exclaimed boyishly, "*I knew* I had known you! And I have—at least, I've seen your picture. You are Oswald Graham's cousin Jean."

"Of course; and you—you are his Yankee friend at Eton, the one who fought him because he said things about America!"

"And jolly well licked I was, too," said Willy gaily. "I didn't even know how to put up my hands;

STORIES THAT END WELL

he made a gorgeous mess of me. And then he hunted me up and took it all back. Of course we were chums after that. I was going to visit him in the holidays, but—”

“But he was drowned, trying to save a child.”

“He did save her. He always did what he set out to do. And if I had only been there—”

“I understand. He said you could swim like a duck.”

“It’s the only sport I’m not a muff at,” said Willy dismally. “It’s just my long arms. But he, *he* could do anything. I don’t suppose I’ll ever stop missing him. He was the only boy friend I ever had.”

“But you have men friends now,” she said gently.

“Yes.” He sat up more erect in his seat. “You saw Mr. Rivers. He’s the best ever.”

“I’ve heard about how good he is and how gruff. That’s the kind I like; no nonsense about them. I hate sissy men, don’t you?”

Willy assented, but without animation; he was diffidently searching his inner consciousness as to whether he himself had not been accused of being a sissy. “Sometimes a fellow seems a sissy when he isn’t,” he offered.

THE LITTLE LONELY GIRL

"Oh, *often*," she agreed heartily; "but the man they want Moira to marry is a genuine muff, a horrid, languid-affected New Yorker who talks like a guardsman and makes fun of his own country. Moira can't endure him; but he offers to settle half a million on her, and we let Effie marry a captain of the line who had only a thousand a year—"

"That was *you*," interrupted Willy fervently. "You did that. Oswald told me—"

"No, it was dad; he couldn't bear to have Effie so unhappy when I told him how she might go into a decline, she felt so wretched. But you see, having let Effie do that and helping her out, we couldn't afford any more detrimentals, although Jimmy's got his colonelcy and the cross and they are ever so happy. But we can't afford another love match. The bishop is dead and Ellen hasn't very much; and Lord Fairley has a big family; he was a widower with five when Ellen married him, and they have two; and *we* are so deadly poor. It is really necessary, but it's awful. And I am sure she cares a lot for Reggy Sackville, a kind of cousin of ours who is a barrister, and she is sure he will be a judge, he is so clever; but he couldn't support a wife for years

STORIES THAT END WELL

and years. Don't you think it's really and truly awful to have to marry *anybody*?"

"Awful—intolerable," agreed Willy. "I simply will not."

"And *your* father wants you—" She looked so sympathetic that Willy broke right in:

"Yes. I never seem able to do anything my father wants. I can't manage men and make friends and run the business as my brothers did. Now he wants me to marry a girl he has picked out for me; and I've got to disappoint him again. I wrote him I'd try to meet his wishes every other way—I'd accept dinner invitations; I'd learn the steel business; I could ride and run an automobile, and I had been up in an airship, and I'd try to win a golf cup; and I'm taking bridge lessons, but—the hand of Douglas was his own, you know."

"I think that's splendid!" cried the girl heartily. "I don't want to; but maybe I shall have to, to save Moira."

"Don't you do it!" he exclaimed. "It makes me sick to think of their trying to force you into such a thing." He did look moved.

"Don't get into such a wax. They can't force me

THE LITTLE LONELY GIRL

—do I look like a person to be forced?—and poor old daddy of all people in the world! If you just knew him; we're the greatest pals in the world. But there's Moira. If I were to marry some one with a lot of money, she could marry poor Reggy; and Moira couldn't stand being unhappy near so well as I can."

"Who's the man?" growled Willy in a tone of mingled gloom and fury.

"I don't know his name," replied the girl sadly. "It was like this: Dad met his father, and they became very chummy, and they got to talking. He talked about his son, who is a 'nice fellow' with elegant tastes and doesn't like business. Oh, I know, a perfectly odious person."

"Odious," Willy agreed morosely; "a downright sissy! You'd be *watched*!"

"Yes," sighed Lady Jean; "but Moira would be wretcheder because she would always be thinking of Reggy. And besides"—she grew more cheerful—"men never fancy me; no doubt he'll think I'm too ugly and dowdy, and I'm so shy I shall be hideously awkward."

"You're nothing of the kind!" Willy interrupted;

STORIES THAT END WELL

"it—it's the most abominable cold-blooded bargain-and-sale business! And your father told you—"

"Oh, no, he didn't tell me. It was Ellen. She was so pleased; she never had any hopes of *me*, don't you know; and now she says they won't need to sacrifice Moira. But if the young man doesn't want me, *I* shan't be to blame. Now tell me about your girl!"

"There's nothing to tell. I never saw her. I don't know her name, even. Only she's got a title; and she is very brilliant and charming and modest, and I'll be lucky. It's another case of parents butting in. All he wants, he says, is for me to *see* her; I told him I should run away if I knew I were in the same town! But never mind me. Don't worry, little girl. *I'll* think up a way to save you all right, all right."

His face, as he spoke, was stern and dark. She was sure that he must have great latent strength of character.

Abruptly she changed the subject recalling the elusive mowing-machine and the approach of the Brookes' dinner-hour. Willy was sure that Mr. Rivers would want her to see the mower, it was—was—so typically American; and if he would take

THE LITTLE LONELY GIRL

her directly and swiftly home, wouldn't she go on another search to-morrow?

"If you win," said she; she felt that she must hesitate at nothing which would give him that cup. "Another thing, don't you give another thought to me; you think every minute of your game. If you distract your mind it may get onto your game."

"I won't let it hurt my game, don't you worry," returned Willy confidently.

Mrs. Brooke had none of the difficulty which she had anticipated in persuading Willy to dine with them; and she wondered what suffering friends of hers who had had his reluctant presence at social functions, meant by their stories. To be sure, he didn't talk much, but he was a most intelligent listener; and he was visibly having a good time.

The next day it was bruited about (no one but Jabez Rivers, who had walked the links with a reporter, could have quite told how) that young Butler was playing a wonderful game. A dozen of the golf lovers deserted the great man and his only less great opponent and saw Willy limp over eleven links, as he beat his man with leisurely ease.

That afternoon, while again searching for the

STORIES THAT END WELL

mowing-machine which that unsuspected but efficient emissary of the Blind God, Jabez Rivers, had advised them to be sure to find—after with his own eyes he had seen it trundling into the garage—Willy submitted his plan of rescue. They were rolling noiselessly along a wide avenue, above which the great elm boughs made a vaulted arch like the groined vault of a cathedral. Through the arches filtered the sunset rose. Willy suddenly stopped the machine. He did not look at her. He clutched the handle of the lever very hard; and she was positive he was pale, a pallor which threw his freckles into high relief. But she was thinking of anything else than freckles.

"I've thought it all out," said Willy very firmly, "and I wouldn't bother you the least little bit, not the least. And we think alike about so many things. I believe I could make it all right with your people. I can do anything, when *you* are backing me. It would ease my mind awfully; I should be sure to win the cup. I know that would please my father, and he'd help us, maybe. Besides, I've a fortune of my own; I'd settle it all on you—"

"What *do* you mean?" cried Lady Jean.

THE LITTLE LONELY GIRL

"You wouldn't need to marry anybody else if you married *me*," said Willy.

"*My word!*" gasped Lady Jean. "But you told me you didn't want to marry *anybody*."

"I shouldn't mind *you* so much," said he.

She was thoughtful, her own mind a chaos to herself. She stole a furtive glance at his miserable face; something tender and compassionate and strange made her lips quiver, but she set them closely.

"You would be making an awful sacrifice for me?"

He did not deny it.

"It would be an awful sacrifice for me, too."

"I know," he acquiesced sadly.

"Still—I suppose you ought to have your mind settled before to-morrow or it will get on your game."

"Yes, that's just it! I'd be awfully grateful—"

Without any warning she began to laugh. "I think you are the funniest boy in the world! I don't want to marry anybody. I want to live with daddy and take care of him and be like Aunt Jean, but if I *have* to marry anybody, I'd rather marry you. Shall we let it go at that for the present?"

STORIES THAT END WELL

"You are awfully good," cried the boy. He wondered at the extraordinary calm, almost elation, of his mood. That he should be engaged to be married and not be revolving suicide! He had read of the exaltation of self-sacrifice—maybe this was it. But how hard it must be for her.

"I'll make it just as easy for you as I can—dear." He added the last word very softly. Probably she didn't hear it, for she answered in her ordinary tone, not in the least offended, that she knew he would, then immediately demanded a sight of the mowing-machine; since it wasn't there, he would better take her home.

"Don't you begin to love this island?" he said, as he obeyed her.

"It is lovely," she said: "I never thought I could really like any place without mountains, but I do."

"I love mountains," said Willy.

"They were again surprised at their similarity of taste. Motor-cars and carriages passed them continually; luxurious open vehicles, victorias and golf-carts and automobiles with their hoods lowered, disclosing billows of diaphanous feminine finery and pretty, uncovered girlish heads. Willy marveled over

THE LITTLE LONELY GIRL

his own ease as he returned greetings punctiliously. A week ago he would have raced his horse into the darkest woodland road to escape a passing salute, the hazard of a little casual badinage.

"How pretty American girls are," said Lady Jean a little wistfully; "such lovely wavy hair."

Willy's glance furtively took note of her sleek brown head and the heavy braid between her slim shoulders, which had caused him to think her a child.

"I don't much like this corrugated hair," said he carelessly; "it looks so machine-made."

Lady Jean declined all proffers of seats, even Rivers' invitation to a place by him in his runabout. She was going to walk; one could see better walking. Which was entirely correct, but was not her most intimate reason; in truth she could not endure to be sitting at her ease while Willy, footsore and weary, would be doggedly tramping after his ball. He presented rather a grotesque figure, did Willy, that eventful morning, being shod as to his sound foot with one of his own neat golf shoes, but as to his left (thanks to the ministrations of Rivers, with one of the latter's ample slippers over swathings of bandage soaked in healing-lotion. Every caddy on the

STORIES THAT END WELL

ground (except Willy's) was in secret ecstasies over his appearance. "We ain't out for a beauty prize, but the champeen golf cup," says the faithful Tommy haughtily. "Yes, that's a bottle of liniment. I wet him up with it between whiles. He's in terrible agony. But he don't mind long's he can keep limber. And say, jest git onto our game, will you? Two up, and first round over."

Tommy and Jean were waiting when the first round ended, Rivers having taken the Brookes to the luncheon-tent to secure seats for them all. The game that morning had surprised all but the newspaper men and the few who had followed Willy the day before. The only hope of the friends of the champion lay in the possible exhaustion of the lame wonder whose unerring approaches were even more dangerous than his drives and his putts. "If his foot holds out," Rivers said to Brooke, "he's got the cup."

And at this very moment, as if fate conspired against Willy's chances, a frightful commotion arose. Willy, talking to Jean a moment about the game, could see the gay groups outside the white tent scatter in violent agitation with waving hands; could hear an uproar of shouts and screams. There came

THE LITTLE LONELY GIRL

a quick change in Lady Jean's face, in every face near—the caddy's, the young red-jacketed officer's at the blackboard, the women's faces in a passing carriage. At first no intelligible sound penetrated the din; but in a thought's time a blood-curdling cry tore out of a score of throats, "Mad dog! Mad dog!" as men with golf-irons and pistols, raced toward the little group on the links, after a foam-flecked, glaring-eyed, panting little beast. The creature made straight for Tommy, who fled like a deer; but his foot hit the marker, and he stumbled and fell. It seemed in the same eye-blink that the dog was on the child and Willy Butler was on the dog, his bare hands twisting its collar into a tourniquet.

With one impulse Lady Jean and the young officer each snatched a golf-club and sprang to help him. "Keep off!" he cried. "I can hold him. Get a strap; we have to keep him alive to find out—*Jean!* For God's sake—"

His heart seemed to stand still. Lady Jean had dropped on her knees by the dog, shielding him from the young officer's club. "Don't," she said; "*he's* not mad! It's Mrs. Brooke's dog— Why can't you *see?* The poor brute's *wagging his tail!*"

STORIES THAT END WELL

“He is,” said Willy; “hold up, boys! A mad dog doesn’t wag his tail.” He released the tourniquet sufficiently to free a piteous whimper. A second later he lifted his hand off the dog, which wriggled into Lady Jean’s compassionate arms as a voice announced, “That’s not the dog!”

The real mad dog—if mad he were—had been despatched by a single shot from a soldier’s gun, rods away; but a panic-stricken crowd had used the customary judgment of panic, and pursued the wrong dog.

“And now,” wrathfully declared Jabez Rivers to his army cronies, “now that poor boy has probably put his wrist out of whack; and his father coming in on the two o’clock train to see him fight for the cup! And this old fool telegraphed for him to come.”

Nevertheless he kept a semblance of confidence. And he has always liked Dickson because he was so sure Willy would win. He offered to caddy for Willy; but Willy gratefully declined, because it would break Tommy’s heart; Tommy’s mother was coming over to see the game. “He’s a real dead-game sport,” Dickson ended, “and a little thing like

THE LITTLE LONELY GIRL

a spurious mad dog isn't going to put him out of the running."

Nor did it; Cleaves made up one of his missing holes, but he got no farther; and at the sixteenth hole Rivers and a small, keen-eyed, quiet-looking man stood up in a runabout and shouted while the great Cleaves, bewildered but invincibly courteous, shook hands with Willy Butler.

"You wait until he has cleaned up a bit" advised Rivers; "give the boy's girl a chance first—there they are; she's talking to him now."

Mr. Butler knew who she was; she had been pointed out to him before; possibly having watched her carefully through the progress of the game, he knew something else, being a man who came to conclusions quickly, on occasion. He looked at her now; he looked at Rivers; the only words that escaped his lips—in a very small, low voice—were, "Wouldn't that make a man believe in answers to prayers!"

"Willy's been going some," said Rivers. "I don't know who you've up your sleeve for him, but we've picked out a winner—a sweet, brave, true-hearted little lady. Don't *you* butt in, Hiram."

"Well, hardly," said Hiram Butler, "since her

STORIES THAT END WELL

father and I picked her out first. But, Jabez, blood will tell; I knew Willy had the makings. Now suppose you and I put the young folks into the machine. They can do their courting on the way."

It may be presumed that he knew, although they took their own original way to Arcadia. Fifteen minutes later, in the heart of the woods which they had sought because, although much longer to the club-house by that road, Willy needed its cool refreshment; fifteen minutes later the boy was saying, "I had to write the note because I didn't have a chance to see you. Have you read it?" He looked up tremulously. "I write an awfully blind handwriting always, and to-day, with playing golf and all, it's worse than ever."

"You could read it out to me, you know," said the girl; she pulled the score-card, on which Willy had scribbled, from her sleeve, and both the young heads bent over it. "'Dear Jean,'" read Willy; then he added, "I hope you don't think that presumptuous, but being engaged—"

"No, never mind that; you called me that to-day, already, at the top of your voice, too."

"You scared me stiff—Jean."

THE LITTLE LONELY GIRL

"You scared me first—before I knew it was Flukes. You are an awfully reckless boy."

"I will go on," said Willy; "it's short." He read:

"Dear Jean, I forgot to say one thing yesterday when I asked you to marry me; I love and adore you. Yours very sincerely, William Godfrey Butler.'"

He said nothing more; neither did she say anything for a space. The squirrels watched them with their bright little eyes, and scampered fearlessly up the very tree under which their car had halted. All at once she began to laugh. "My word! but you look miserable, William Butler. I know it is a sacrifice; I made up my mind to release you; I only consented yesterday to make you easy in your mind for the game."

Then he surprised her. "That was yesterday," said he. "To-day I know why all the world has been different ever since I saw you; I knew everything I felt when you ran to that dog—"

"Then it will not be an awful sacrifice for you?"

He took her little cold brown hand; I had forgotten there was such a thing in the world as fear. "It will be heaven for me," he said. "But for you?"

She looked away at the squirrels; she tried in vain

STORIES THAT END WELL

to speak in her gay, light tone. "I—I found out something this morning, too."

So Arcady lured two new explorers, who, going through its subtly winding paths, naturally took quite a little while to reach the club-house and the ovation waiting the champion. Just outside the portals Lady Jean uttered a little cry. "Why, I do believe! Why, *Willy!* There's the motor mower!"

There in the body, resting amid long lines of green stubble, there, indeed, stood the long-sought mower.

"I'm obliged to it," said Willy, "but I don't need it now."

THE HERO OF COMPANY G

THE flies and the sun! The sun and the flies! The two tents of the division ward in the hospital had been pitched end to end, thus turning them into one. The sun filtered through the cracks of the canvas; it poured in a broad, dancing, shifting column of gold through the open tent flap. The air was hot, not an endurable, dry heat, but a moist, sticky heat which drew an intolerable mist from the water standing in pools beneath the plain flooring of the tents. The flies had no barrier and they entered in noisome companies, to swarm, heavily buzzing, about the medicine spoons and the tumblers and crawl over the nostrils and mouths of the typhoid patients, too weak and stupid to brush them away. The other sick men would lift their feeble skeletons of hands against them; and a tall soldier who walked between the cots and was the sole nurse on duty, waved his palm-leaf fan at them and swore softly under his breath.

STORIES THAT END WELL

There were ten serious cases in the ward. The soldier was a raw man detailed only the day before and not used to nursing, being a blacksmith in civil life. An overworked surgeon had instructed him in the use of a thermometer; but he was much more confident of the success of his lesson than the instructed one. There was one case in particular bothered the nurse; he returned to the cot where this case lay more than once and eyed the gaunt figure which lay so quietly under the sheet, with a dejected attention. Once he laid his hand shyly on the sick man's forehead, and when he took it away he strangled a desperate sort of sigh. Then he walked to the end of the tent and stared dismally down the camp street, flooded with sunshine. "Well, thank God, there's Spruce!" said he. A man in a khaki uniform, carrying a bale of mosquito netting, was walking smartly through the glare. He stopped at the tent. "How goes it?" said he, cheerfully but in the lowest of tones. He was a short man and thin, but with a good color under his tan, and teeth gleaming at his smile, white as milk.

"Why, I'm kinder worried about Maxwell—"

Before he could finish his sentence, Spruce was

THE HERO OF COMPANY G

at Maxwell's cot. His face changed. "Git the hot-water bottle quick's you can!" he muttered, "and git the screen—the one I made!" As he spoke he was dropping brandy into the corners of Maxwell's mouth. The brandy trickled down the chin.

"He looks awful quiet, don't he?" whispered the nurse with an awestruck glance.

"You git them things!" said Spruce, and he sent a flash of his eyes after his words, whereat the soldier shuffled out of the tent, returning first with the screen and last with the bottles. Then he watched Spruce's rapid but silent movements. At last he ventured to breathe: "Say, he ain't—he ain't—he ain't—?"

Spruce nodded. The other turned a kind of groan into a cough and wiped his face. Awkwardly he helped Spruce wherever there was the chance for a hand; and in a little while his bungling agitation reached the worker, who straightened up and turned a grim face on him.

"Was it me?" he whispered then. "For God's sake, Spruce—I did everything the doctor told me, nigh's I could remember. I didn't disturb him, 'cause he 'peared to be asleep. I—I never saw a man die before!"

STORIES THAT END WELL

"It ain't no fault of yours," said Spruce in the same low whisper. "I'm sorry for you. Did you give him the ice I got?"

"Yes, I did, Sergeant."

"And was there enough for Green and Dick Danvers?"

"Yes, I kept it rolled up in flannel and newspapers. Say, I got a little more, Sergeant."

"How?"

"The doctors or some fellers had a tub of lemonade outside, a little bit further down. I chipped off a bit."

Spruce ground his teeth, but he made no comment. All he said was, "You go git Captain Hale and report. Tell the captain I got his folks' address. They'll want him sent home. They're rich folks and they were coming on; guess they're on the way now. Be quiet!"

The soldier was looking at the placid face. A sob choked him. "He said, 'Thank you,' every time I gave him anything," he gulped. "God! it's murder to put fools like me at nursing; and the country full of women that know how and want to come!"

THE HERO OF COMPANY G

"S-s-s! 'Tain't no good talking. You done your best. Go and report."

As the wretched soldier lumbered off, Spruce set his teeth on an ugly oath.

"I ought to have stayed, maybe," he thought, "but I've been doing with so little sleep, my head was feeling dirty queer; and the doctor sent me. Collapse, of course; temperature ran down to normal, and poor Tooley didn't notice, and him too weak to talk! Well, I hope I git the G boys through, that's all I ask!"

He went over to the next cot, where lay the nearest of the G boys, greeting him cheerily. "Hello, Dick?"

Dick was a handsome young specter, just beginning to turn the corner in a bad case of typhoid fever. His blue eyes lighted at Spruce's voice; and he sent a smile back at Spruce's smile. "Did you get some sleep?" said he. "What's that you have in your hand?"

"That's milk, real milk from a cow. Yes, lots of sleep; you drink that."

The sick man drank it with an expression of

STORIES THAT END WELL

pleasure. "I don't believe any of the others get milk," he murmured; "save the rest for Edgar."

"Edgar don't need it, Dick," Spruce answered gently.

Dick drew a long, shivering sigh and his eyes wandered to the screen. "He was a soldier and he died for his country jest the same as if he were hit by a Mauser," said Spruce—he had taken the sick boy's long, thin hand and was smoothing his fingers.

"It's no more 'an what we all got to expect when we enlist."

"Of course," said Dick, smiling, "that's all right, for him or for me, but he—he was an awfully good fellow, Chris."

"Sure," said Spruce. "Now, you lie still; I got to look after the other boys."

"Come back when you have seen them, Chris."

"Sure."

Spruce made his rounds. He was the star nurse of the hospital. It was partly experience. Chris Spruce had been a soldier in the regulars and fought Indians and helped the regimental surgeon through a bad attack of typhoid. But it was as much a natural gift. Chris had a light foot, a quick eye,

THE HERO OF COMPANY G

a soft voice; he was indomitably cheerful and consoled the most querulous patient in the ward by describing how much better was his lot with no worse than septic pneumonia, than that of a man whom he (Spruce) had known well who was scalped. Spruce had enlisted from a Western town where he had happened to be at the date of his last discharge. He had a great opinion of the town. And he never tired recalling the scene of their departure, amid tears and cheers and the throbbing music of a brass band, with their pockets full of cigars, and an extra car full of luncheon boxes, and a thousand dollars company spending money to their credit.

"A man he comes up to me," says Spruce, "big man in the town, rich and all that. He says, calling me by name—I don't know how he ever got my name, but he had it—he says, 'I'm told you've been with the regulars; look after the boys a little,' says he. 'That I will,' says I, 'I've been six years in the service and I know a few wrinkles.' I do, too. He gave me a five-dollar bill after he'd talked a while to me, and one of his own cigars. 'Remember the town's back of you!' says he. 'Tis, too. I'd a letter from the committee they got there, asking if we had

STORIES THAT END WELL

everything; offering to pay for nurses if they'd be allowed. Oh, it's a bully town!"

Spruce himself had never known the sweets of local pride. He had drifted about in the world, until at twenty he drifted into the regular army. He had no kindred except a brother whose career was so little creditable that Spruce was relieved when it ended—were the truth known, in a penitentiary. He had an aunt of whom he often spoke and whom he esteemed a credit to the family. She was a widow woman in an Iowa village, who kept a boarding house for railway men, and had reared a large family, not one of whom (Spruce was accustomed to explain in moments of expansion, on pay-day, when his heart had been warmed with good red liquor) had ever been to jail. Spruce had never seen this estimable woman, but he felt on terms of intimacy with her because, occasionally, on these same pay-days, he would mail her a five-dollar bank-note, the receipt of which was always promptly acknowledged by a niece who could spell most of her words correctly and who always thanked him for his "kind and welcome gift," told him what they proposed to do with the money, and invited him to come to see them.

THE HERO OF COMPANY G

He always meant to go, although he never did go. It was his favorite air-castle, being able to go on furlough to the village where his aunt lived and show his medal. He had won the medal in an Indian fight where he had rescued his captain. The captain died of his wounds and Spruce never got drunk (which I regret to confess he did oftener than was good either for his soul or the service) that he didn't talk about his captain, who had been his hero; and cry over him. Spruce, who was a cheery creature in his normal state, always developed sentiment and pathos when he was revealed by liquor. Now he had another day-dream. It was to be greeted by the cheering crowds—again he would march down the sunny streets with the band playing, amid the faces and the shouts. And the men who had stood by the company so stanchly would be pointing him out and telling each other his mythical exploits—and adding the record of his Indian exploits—which Spruce felt that an inattentive country had not appreciated. A dozen times a day he pictured the scene, he mentally listened to the talk—he, walking with a rigid and unseeing military mien. He approximated the number of glasses a man could take

STORIES THAT END WELL

without even grazing indecorum—for he was determined he would not be riotous in his joy—and he used to whistle the refrain of a convivial song:

Enj'y yourselves, enj'y yourselves
But don't do no disgrace!

Meanwhile, his consciousness of in some way caring for the whole company held him a model of sobriety. In fact, he did take care of the company, secretly instructing the captain in the delicacies of military etiquette and primitive sanitary conditions, and openly showing the commissary sergeant how to make requisitions and barter his superfluous rations for acceptable canned goods at the groceries of the town. He explained all the regulars' artless devices for being comfortable; he mended the boys' morals and their blouses in the same breath; and he inculcated all the regular traditions and superstitions. But it is to be confessed again, that while Spruce was living laboriously up to his lights of righteousness under this new stimulus, the lights were rather dim; and, in particular, as regards the duty of a man to pick up outlying portable property for his com-

THE HERO OF COMPANY G

pany—they would have shocked a police magistrate. Neither did he rank among the martial virtues the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. “A good captain is always a kicker,” says Spruce firmly; “he’s got to be. Look at this here camp, Captain; the mess tent’s all under water; we’re standing in the slush every damned meal we eat. Water’s under our tent, water—”

“I know, I know, Sergeant,” interrupts the perplexed and worried young captain, a clever young dandy bright enough to be willing to take wisdom without shoulder straps; “I’ve been to the colonel; he agrees with me, and he’s been to Major Green, and that’s all comes of it. I don’t see what I can do further, if I did—”

“Begging your pardon, Captain, the men will be falling sick soon and dying. They’re weakened by the climate and being fretted, expecting always to git off and never going.”

“But what can I do? Oh, speak out, we’re off here alone. Have you any idea?”

“Well, sir, if you was my captain in the old —th, you’d say to the colonel, ‘Colonel, I’ve remonstrated and remonstrated. Now I’m desperate. I’m des-

STORIES THAT END WELL

perate,' says you. 'If there ain't something done to-morrow I'm going to march my company out and find a new camp, and you kin court-martial me if you please. I'd rather stand a court-martial than see my men die!' He'd talk real pleasant at first, so as to git in all his facts, and then he'd blaze away. And he'd do it, too, if they didn't listen."

The captain gave the sergeant a keen glance. "And that's your notion of discipline?" said he.

"There's a newspaper fellow asking for you, Captain, this morning. I see him a-coming now," was the sergeant's oblique response. But he chuckled, walking stiffly away, "He'll do it; I bet we won't be here two days longer." For which glee there was reason, since, inside the hour, the captain was in the colonel's tent, concluding an eloquent picture of his company's discomforts with "Somebody has to do something. If you are powerless, Colonel, I'm not. If they don't give some assurance of changing the camp to-morrow I shall march Company G out and pitch a camp myself, and stand a court-martial. I would rather risk a court-martial than see my men die—and that's what it has come to!"

The colonel looked the fiery young speaker sternly

THE HERO OF COMPANY G

in the eye, and said something about unsoldierly conduct.

"It would be unmanly conduct for me to let the boys trusted to me die, because I was afraid to speak out," flung back the captain. "And I know one thing: if I am court-martialed the papers are likely to get the true story."

"You mean the reporter on the Chicago papers who is snooping around? Let me advise you to give him a wide berth."

"I mean nothing of the kind, sir. I only mean that the thing will not be done in a corner."

"Well, well, keep cool, Captain, you're too good a fellow to fling yourself away. Wait and see if I can't get something definite out of the major to-day."

Whereupon the captain departed with outward decent gloom and inward premonitions of rejoicing, for when he had hit a nail on the head he had eyes to see. And the colonel betook himself, hot-foot, to the pompous old soldier in charge of the camp, who happened to be a man of fixed belief in himself, but, if he feared anything, was afraid of a newspaper reporter. The colonel gave him the facts, sparing no

STORIES THAT END WELL

squalid detail; indeed, adding a few picturesque embellishments from his own observations. He cut short the other's contemptuous criticism of boy soldiers, and his comparison with the hardships endured during the Civil War, with a curt "I know they fooled away men's lives then; that is no reason we should fool them away now. The men are sickening to-day—they will be dying to-morrow; I'm desperate. If that camp is not changed by to-morrow I shall march my regiment out myself and pitch my own camp, and you may court-martial me for it if you like. I would rather stand a court-martial than see my men die, because I was afraid to speak out! The camp we have now is murder, as the reporters say! I don't wonder that young fellow from Chicago talks hard!"

"You're excited, Colonel; you forget yourself."

"*I am* excited, Major; I'm desperate! Will you walk round the camp with me?"

The end of the colloquy was that the captain saw the major and the colonel and told the first-lieutenant, who told the first-sergeant, whose name was Spruce. "Captain's kicked to the colonel, I guess," says Spruce, "and colonel's kicked to the major.

THE HERO OF COMPANY G

That's the talk. Git ready, boys, and pack." True enough, the camp was moved the very next day.

"I guess captain will make an officer if he lives and don't git the big head," Spruce moralized. "It's mighty prevalent in the volunteers."

The captain wrote the whole account home to one single confidant—his father—and him he swore to secrecy. The captain's father was the man who had committed Company G to Spruce's good offices. He sent a check to the company and a special box of cigars to Spruce. And Spruce, knowing nothing of the intermediary, felt a more brilliant pride in his adopted town, and bragged of its virtues more vehemently than ever. The camp was not moved soon enough. Pneumonia and typhoid fever appeared. One by one the boys of the regiment sickened. Presently one by one they began to die.

Then Spruce suggested to the captain: "I guess I'd be more good in the hospital than I am here, Captain." And the captain (who was scared, poor lad, and had visions of the boys' mothers demanding the wasted lives of their sons at his hands) had his best sergeant put on the sick detail. If Spruce had been useful in camp he was invaluable in hospital.

STORIES THAT END WELL

The head surgeon leaned on him, with a jest, and the young surgeon in charge with pretense of abuse. "You'll burst if you don't work off your steam, Spruce, so out with it. What is it *now*?" In this fashion he really sought both information and suggestion. Nor was he above being instructed in the innumerable delicacies of requisitions by the old regular, and he did not, when requisitions were unanswered and supplies appeared in unusual form, ask any embarrassing questions. "I get 'em from the Red Cross, sir," was Spruce's invariable and unquestioned formula.

And the doctor in his reports accounted for what he had received and complained lustily because his requisitions were not honored, even as Spruce had desired, and, thereby, he obtained much credit, in the days to come. Spruce did not obtain any particular credit, but he saved a few lives, it is likely; and the sick men found him better than medicine. The captain always handed the committee letters over to him; and bought whatever he desired.

"Captain's going to distinguish himself, give him a chance," thought Spruce, "he's got *sense!*"

And by degrees he began to feel for the young

THE HERO OF COMPANY G

volunteer a reflection of the worship which had secretly been offered to a certain fat little bald-headed captain of the old —steenth. His picture of the great day when he should have his triumph —quite as dear to him, perhaps, as any Roman general's to the Roman—now always included a vision of the captain, slender and straight and bright-eyed, at the head of the line; and he always could see the captain, later in the day, presenting him to his father; "Here's Sergeant Spruce, who has coached us all!" He had overheard those very words once said to a girl visiting the camp, and they clung to his memory with the persistent sweetness of the odor of violets.

To-day he was thinking much more of the captain than of young Danvers, though Danvers ranked next in his good will. Danvers was a college lad who had begged and blustered his mother into letting him go. He would not let her know how ill he was, but had the captain write to his married sister, in the same town but not the same house. She, in sore perplexity, wrote to both the captain and Spruce and kept her trunk packed, expecting a telegram. Danvers used to talk of her and of his mother and of his

STORIES THAT END WELL

little nephews and nieces to Spruce, at first in mere broken sentences—this was when he was so ill they expected that he might die any day—later in little happy snatches of reminiscence. He was perfectly aware that he owed his life to Spruce's nursing; and he gave Spruce the same admiration which he had used to give the great man who commanded the university football team. The social hiatus between them closed up insensibly, as it always does between men who are in danger and suffering together. Danvers knew Spruce's footfall and his thin face would lighten with a smile whenever the sergeant came in sight. He liked the strong, soft touch of his hand, the soothing cadence of his voice; he felt a gratitude which he was too boyish to express for the comfort of Spruce's baths and rubbings and cheerfulness. The other sick lads had a touch of the same feeling for the sergeant. As he passed from cot to cot, even the sickest man could make some little sign of relief at his return.

Spruce's heart, a simple and tender affair, as a soldier's is, oftener than people know, swelled within him, not for the first time.

"Well, I guess I done right to come here," thought

THE HERO OF COMPANY G

he, "and I guess all the G boys will be out of the woods this week, and then I don't care how soon we git our orders."

Danvers stopped him when he returned. "I want to speak to you, Chris," he next said, and a new note in his voice turned Spruce about abruptly.

"What's the matter, Dick?"

"Oh, nothing, I only wanted to be sure you'd come back and say good-by before you got off. The regiment's got its orders, you know?"

"*No!*" cried Spruce. He swallowed a little gasp. "What are you giving me?"

"Oh, it's straight; I heard them talking. Colonel has the order; the boys are packing to-day."

Spruce's eyes burned, he was minded to make some exclamations of profane joy, but his mood fell at the sight of the boy's quivering smile.

"Great, isn't it?" said Danvers. "I wish they'd waited two weeks and given us fellows a show, but I dare say there won't be any show by that time, the way they are after the dons at Santiago. Can't you get off now, to pack? But—you'll be sure to come back and say good-by, Chris!"

"I ain't off yet," said Spruce, "and I ain't too sure

STORIES THAT END WELL

I will be. They're always gitting orders and making an everlasting hustle to pack up, and then unpacking. You go to sleep."

He was about to move away, but Danvers detained him, saying that he wanted to be turned; and as the soldier gently turned him, the boy got one of his hands and gave it a squeeze. He tried to say something, but was barely able to give Spruce a foolish smile. "Spruce, you're a soldier and a gentleman!" he stammered. He turned away his head to hide the tears in his eyes. But Spruce had seen them. Of course he made no sign, stepping away briskly, with a little pat on the lean shoulder.

He came back softly in a little while. He looked at Danvers, who was simulating sleep, with his dark lashes fallen over red eyelids, and he shook his head. During his absence he had found that the orders were no rumor. The regiment was going to Porto Rico sure enough. Spruce stood a moment, before he sat down by Danvers' side. But he barely was seated ere he was on his feet again, in a nervous irritation which none had ever seen in Spruce. He walked to the door of the tent and gazed, in the same attitude that the nurse had gazed, an hour earlier,

THE HERO OF COMPANY G

at the low, white streets. Two great buzzards were flying low against the hot, cloudless vault of blue.

"Them boys'll be all broke up if I go!" said Spruce.

He frowned and fidgeted. In fact, he displayed every symptom of a man struggling with a fit of furious temper. What really was buffeting Spruce's soul was not, however, anger, it was the temptation of his life. Spruce had known few temptations; at least, he had recognized few. His morality was the lenient, rough-hewn article which satisfies a soldier's conscience. He had no squeamishness about the sins outside his limited category; he fell into them blithely and had no remorse when he remembered them, wherefore he preserved a certain incongruous innocence even in his vices, as has happened to many a man before. It is, perhaps, the moral nature's own defense; and keeps untouched and ever fresh little nooks and corners of a sinner's soul, into which the conscience may retreat and from which sometimes she sallies forth to conquer the abandoned territory. What Spruce called his duty he had done quite as a matter of course. He had not wavered any more than he wavered when the war bonnets were swoop-

STORIES THAT END WELL

ing down on his old captain's crumpled-up form. But this—this was different. The boys needed him. But if he stayed with the boys, there was the regiment and the company and the captain and the chance to distinguish himself and march back in glory to his town.

"I guess most folks would say I'd *ought* to follow the colors," he thought; "raw fellers like them, they need a steady, old hand. Well, they've got Bates." (Bates was an old regular, also, of less enterprising genius than Spruce, but an admirable soldier.) "I s'pose,"—grudgingly—"that Bates would keep 'em steady. And captain can fight, and the colonel was a West Point man, though he's been out of the army ten years, fooling with the millish. I guess they don't need me so awful bad this week; and these 'ere boys—Oh, damn it all!" He walked out of the tent. There was a little group about a wagon, at which he frowned and sighed. "Poor Maxwell!" he said. Then he tossed his head and stamped his foot. "Oh, damn it all!" said he again, between his teeth.

But his face and manner were back on their old level of good cheer when he bent over Danvers, half an hour later.

THE HERO OF COMPANY G

"Sa—y! Dick!"

"Yes, Chris. You come to say good-by! Well, it's good luck to you and God bless you from every boy here; and we know what you've done for us, and we won't forget it; and we'll all hurry up to get well and join you!" Danvers' voice was steady enough now and a pathetic effort at a cheer came from all the cots.

Spruce lifted his fist and shook it severely. "You shut up! All of you! You'll raise your temperature! I ain't going, neither. Be quiet. It's all settled. I've seen captain, and he wants me to stay and see you boys through; all the G boys. Then we're all going together. I tell you, keep quiet."

Dick Danvers was keeping quiet enough, for one; he was wiping away the tears that rolled down his cheeks.

The others in general shared his relief in greater or less measure; but they were too ill to think much about anything except themselves. In some way, however, every one in the tent showed to Spruce that he felt that a sacrifice had been made.

"I know you hated it like the devil, and just stayed for fear some of your precious chickens would come

STORIES THAT END WELL

to mischief if they got from under your wings, you old hen!" was Dick's tribute; "and I know why you went into town yesterday when the boys went off. It *is* rough, Chris, and that's the truth!"

"Oh, it's only putting things off a bit; the captain told me so himself," said Spruce, very light and airy. But his heart was sore. The G boys understood; he wasn't so sure that all the others did understand. He caught his name on one gossiping group's lips, and was conscious that they gazed after him curiously. "Wonder if I'm scared that I stayed home, I guess," he muttered, being a sensitive fellow like all vain men. "I wish they'd see the things I've been in! Damn 'em!"

The men really were discussing his various Indian experiences and admiring him in their boyish hearts. But he was unluckily out of earshot. Unluckily, also, he was not out of earshot when a lieutenant of another regiment who had had a difference about a right of way with Spruce's captain and been worsted by Spruce's knowledge of military traditions freed his mind about that "bumptious regular who was so keen to fight, but (he noticed) was hanging on to his sick detail, now the regiment had a chance to see a

THE HERO OF COMPANY G

few Spaniards." Spruce, in his properly buttoned uniform, his face red with the heat and something of the words, saluted rigorously and passed by, not a single muscle twitching. All the while he was thinking: "I'm glad he don't belong to *my* town! God! If anybody was to write them things about me!"

By this time the town was not only his town, but he was sure that he was a figure in the conversation of the place. Thus his anxiety of mind increased daily. He kept it from his charges, who grew stronger all the week, and the next; and he read such papers as drifted out to the camp and such shreds of news about the fighting with frantic interest. Danvers was able to sit up at the end of three weeks, but most of the boys were further along, walking about the wards, or gone back to their regiment.

"You get out, Chris," said Danvers, "we all know you're on your head with aching to go. *We're* all right; and I'm off home on furlough to-morrow; I'll get straightened out there quicker, and I'll be after you next week, see if I don't! I knew you'd be hanging on, so I won't give you the excuse. My sister's coming to-morrow."

STORIES THAT END WELL

"Really, Dick," gasped Spruce, "and you—you're sure the other boys are so's I can leave?"

"Well, you know there are going to be some women from the Red Cross, last of the week—Oh, by the time we are all out of it, this will be a swell hospital, with all the luxuries! Spruce, go, and don't get hurt, or I'll murder you!"

Spruce giggled like a happy girl. He was on his way to put in his application to join his regiment the next day—after Dick Danvers' sister had arrived, when something happened. He did not exactly know what it was himself, until he felt the water on his forehead and tried to lift himself up from the sand, catching the arm of the surgeon-in-chief. "Sunstroke, doctor?" he whispered.

"Just fainted," the surgeon answered cheerfully, "you've been overdoing it in this heat. Be careful."

"Oh, it's nothing, sir," Spruce grinned back; "had it lots of times, only not so bad. All the boys git giddy heads—"

Somehow the ready words faltered off his tongue; the surgeon had been fumbling at his blouse, under the pretext of opening it for air, he was looking in a queer, intent way at Spruce's chest.

THE HERO OF COMPANY G

Of a sudden the eyes of doctor and soldier, who had been nurse, met and challenged each other. There was a dumb terror in the soldier's eyes, a grave pity in the surgeon's. "I seen them spots yesterday," said Spruce, slowly, in a toneless voice, "but I wouldn't believe they was typhoid spots, nor they ain't!"

"You get inside and get a drink, Spruce, and go to bed," said the doctor. "Of course, I'm not certain, but as good a nurse as you knows that it isn't safe to try to bluff typhoid fever."

By this time Spruce was on his feet, able to salute with his reply: "That's all right, Major, but—I got to keep up till Danvers gits off with his folks, or he'd be kicking and want to stay. Jest let me see him off, and I'll go straight to bed."

"No walking about, mind, though," said the doctor, not well pleased, yet knowing enough of the two men to perceive the point of the argument.

Spruce saw Danvers off, with a joke and a grin, and an awkward bow for Danvers' sister. Then he went back to the hospital and went to bed, having written his aunt's address on a prescription pad (one of his acquirements in his foraging trips) with a

STORIES THAT END WELL

remarkably spelled request that his pay be sent her, and his other property be given his friend, R. E. Danvers, to divide among his friends, giving the captain first choice.

"Lots of folks die of typhoid fever," he remarked quite easily, "and it don't hurt to be ready. I feel like I was in for a bad time, and I ain't stuck on the nursing here a little bit."

Before the week was out he recognized as well as the doctors that he was a very sick man.

"If you'd only gone off with your regiment three weeks ago," the doctor growled one day, "you'd have missed this, Spruce."

"That's all right," said Spruce, "but some of the boys are home that wouldn't be, maybe. I guess it's all right. Only, you know captain and Danvers; I wish you'd write back to the old town and tell the committee I done my duty. I can't be a credit to the company, but I done my duty, though I expect there's folks in town may think I was malingering."

"Stop talking!" commanded the doctor. "Did you know the women are coming to-morrow; you are to have a nurse of your own here?"

THE HERO OF COMPANY G

"Time," said Spruce; "if my town had its way they'd been here long ago. Ever been in my town, Major?"

"No. Good-by, Spruce; keep quiet."

"It's the bulliest town in the country, and the prettiest. And when G company goes back—Oh, Lord, I won't be with 'em!"

The surgeon's hand on his shoulder prevented the movement which he would have made, and he apologized; "I didn't mean to do that! Moving's so bad. Tell you, I'd a time keeping the boys still; they *would* turn when they got a little off. Say, I got to talk, Major, something's broke loose in me and I *got* to talk. I don't want to, I just got to."

When the nurse came he was so light-headed as to have no control of his words, yet quite able to recognize her and welcome her with an apologetic politeness.

"I'd have had some lemonade for you if I'd been up myself, ma'am. We're glad to see you. All the G boys are convalescing; most of 'em's gone. We all come from the same city; it's an awful pretty town. I got a lot of friends there that maybe don't take it in why I'm here 'stead of with my regiment,

STORIES THAT END WELL

with the old man. I got a good reason; only I can't remember it now."

The captain's father stood outside the telegraph office in Spruce's town. Beside him was the chairman of the relief committee.

"Too bad about that regular," said the chairman. "Spruce—isn't that his name? One of the boys telegraphed he couldn't live through the day. Better have him brought here for the funeral, I guess; he's been very faithful. Young Danvers wanted to go right down to Florida; but he had a relapse after he got home and he's flat on his back."

"I heard," said the captain's father; "I've just telegraphed, on my own responsibility, for them to send him here. It won't make any difference to him, poor fellow; but we owe it to him. I wish we could do something that would help him, but I don't see anything."

"We have told them to spare no expense, and he's got plenty of money. No, you have done everything. Well, good-by; remember me to the captain; we're all proud of him."

The captain's father thanked him with rather an

THE HERO OF COMPANY G

absent air. "I wish we could do something for that fellow," he was thinking; "I don't suppose a message to him would—when a fellow's dying, messages are nonsense—it's a bit of sentiment—I don't care, I'll do it!" He turned and went back into the office.

"I am afraid there is not a chance," said the doctor; "too bad, he was a good fellow. Well, you can give him all the morphine he needs—and strychnine, though he's past strychnine, I fear; morphine's the one chance, and that's mighty little."

"He talked about wanting to see you," said the nurse. She had a sweet voice, plainly a lady's voice; and her slim figure, in the blue-striped gown and white surplice, had a lady's grace. Her face was not handsome, nor was it very young, but it had a touch of her voice's sweetness. The doctor found himself glad to look at her; and forgetting his patients in his interest in the nurse.

"Oh, yes,"—he roused himself—"I'll look 'round later; I suppose he is delirious?"

"Not so much that he does not recognize us. He talks all the time of his town, poor fellow, and seems

STORIES THAT END WELL

to want to have them understand that he hasn't neglected his duty. He only once has spoken of any relations. It's all the town, and the captain and Danvers making it right there; and the boys going back—I suppose he has lived there all his life and—”

“Not a bit of it; Danvers told me he merely enlisted from there. But they are making a great time over him. Telegraphed to have his body sent there; and here's another telegram. See—”

“I'll let him see,” said the nurse, taking it, “may I, Doctor?”

“Yes, but not the first part about sending him back; that's a little too previous.”

The nurse's touch roused Spruce. “Dick,” he murmured, “Dick, you tell the folks. I couldn't go with the regiment—you know why.”

“They know why, too; here's a telegram from your captain's father: ‘Tell Spruce he's the hero of Company G.’”

“Read it again!”

She read it. His hand tightened on hers. Her trained eyes were on his face.

“Ain't it the—the *bulliest* town! I wisht *I'd* enough money to go back; but you see my folks got to have my pay. But I wisht—”

THE HERO OF COMPANY G

Her eyes, not the nurse's now, but a woman's, sought the doctor's in a glance of question and appeal. He nodded.

Her sweet voice said: "And the town has telegraphed that no expense must be spared to cure you; but if you don't recover you are to go back to them."

Spruce drew a long, ecstatic sigh. "Oh—didn't I tell you? Ain't it the bulliest town!"

A minute later he murmured, "Thank you, Dick," and, still holding the nurse's hand, Spruce went to see his town.

A MIRACLE PLAY

THE widow Darter's house was set on a hill. It was a story-and-a-half cottage, of stucco, to which sun and wind and frost had offered their kind offices, mellowing pleasantly its original glare of white. In summer a trumpet-vine draped the ugly little piazza which Emmy's "art-needle work" had helped build, and which she and her mother admired with simple hearts. The big burr oak and the maples hid the house from the road, but the grassy knoll in front of the house was bare, and from this vantage-ground one could see the shallow curve of whitish-brown where the village street climbed the hill, the chimneys of the houses below, and, afar off, the trains roaring through the prairies. All the village was interested in the railway, but Emmy had an especial and intimate interest because her sweetheart was the local agent. He had been her sweetheart during five years, in any one of which he would have been proud and glad to marry her; yet

A MIRACLE PLAY

this was the fifth year of their betrothal, and Emmy was drearily reflecting that they were no nearer the chance to spend their lives together the fifth than the first.

Emmy was hanging out clothes. It was four o'clock in the afternoon, but she had just brought out the large basket and was pinning the garments to the line, while Virginia, her sister, a little girl in short skirts and a blue checked apron, helped with the less cumbrous stockings and handkerchiefs. The child was pretty. She had a fresh color and curly yellow hair. Emmy's hair was black, and twisted in a braid about a shapely head. It shone like silk. But her eyes were gray, soft, and liquid. She was slender, with a youthful liteness in her motions, and her white arms flashed as they moved backward and forward in her work. The sleeves of her blue gown were rolled up; the gown itself was plainly her work-a-day garb, but there was a white lawn tie at her neck and the gown was both neat and becoming; in short, she was an attractive little creature who did not neglect her looks even of a wash-day.

The widow Darter sat on the piazza in a large rocking-chair. She rocked. As she rocked, she

STORIES THAT END WELL

moaned piteously. At intervals she changed the sibilant moan into a hollow groaning sound. "Oh dear! Oh dear! Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear!" wailed the widow. "Um-m! um-m! um-m-m-m!"

The little girl flung a frown of impatience over her shoulder. "I don't see why mamma makes such an *awful* racket!" she snapped.

"She suffers," said Emmy.

"Well, she needn't holler so if she does," cried Virginia, rebelliously. "I know she wouldn't let *me* holler when I stubbed my toe. It hurt awful, too!"

Emmy said nothing.

"Say, are you going to the picnic with Bert tomorrow afternoon?" said the child.

"No, Jinny, I don't see how I can. Mother's so sick."

"Well, I told Bert I was willing to take care of mamma; and he said he'd buy me a new doll if I would. I guess he wants you to go awful."

"Oh-h dear! Oh-h dear!" droned the sufferer on the piazza.

"Well, I can't," said Emmy. "I wish you'd run and ask mother if she wants anything."

"She don't; she's been going on that way all the

A MIRACLE PLAY

afternoon." But Jinny granted the request after the easy-going manner of her age; she turned on her heel and sent a shout at her mother—"Say, mamma! you want anything?"

Mrs. Darter shook her head. The din of woe swelled in volume.

"I s'pose she wants you to read to her; she says I don't read with expression," said the little girl. "But we're all read out; you put off the washing to read the end of *A Romance of Two Worlds*, and we've got to wait until No. 9 comes in! Albert said he'd sent for a whooping big pile of books from Davenport; you can get 'em at the dry-goods stores for five cents a book. And Mrs. Conner'll bring them up, won't she, when she comes? She's got to go for her boarder." Emmy nodded. Mrs. Darter groaned more softly, a sign that she was distracted by something from her own griefs of mind or body. Jinny chattered on. "Miss Ann Bigelow told me Mrs. Conner's going to have a girl from the University of Chicago for a boarder this time, but she's only coming for a week. Sibyl Edmunds knows her well. And, Emmy, she takes pictures, and she's going to bring her camera."

STORIES THAT END WELL

"Emmy! *Emmy!* there comes Mrs. Conner!" screamed her mother.

Her words were accompanied by the vision of a white horse and an ancient phaeton (which had been newly washed for the occasion) just beyond the lilac-bushes at the gate. Mrs. Conner's comely presence filled the better part of the seat, but the eyes of all the Darters traveled at once to the slim girl in gray covert-cloth who sat beside her. The girl looked like hundreds of rather pretty American girls, with gray eyes and brown hair and dimples in their cheeks. She was pretty as youth and cheerfulness and dainty clothes are always pretty, but Emmy's gaze dwelt on her with reverence. "That's a camera she's holding—in that box," she said in a low tone to Jinny, "she's the girl that got the scholarship." Emmy sighed.

Mrs. Conner had stopped the horse. She responded to Emmy's greeting by presenting her to the girl in gray. "Miss Doris Keith; she's going to the Chicago University. She knows Sibyl." Then she fished out a package from the luggage heaped at their feet. "Here's the books. That your ma on the piazza?"

A MIRACLE PLAY

As if in response, a few hollow moans floated from the rocking-chair.

"She seems in great pain," said Miss Keith, sympathetically.

Emmy's fair skin reddened painfully. "No, she—she isn't well," she stammered.

Mrs. Conner coughed a dry, inexpressive cough.

"I do wish you would step in and see mother for a minute," Emmy begged, as much with her eyes as with her voice. "I can hitch the horse if Miss Keith minds—"

But Miss Keith did not mind; she was quite willing to hold the horse. And the horse sagging his elderly head, appeared of no mind to move, whether "held" or no.

"Well?" said Mrs. Conner, when they were out of earshot.

"Mother thinks she is threatened with pleurisy, and she is trying the starvation cure," answered Emmy. "She hasn't eaten a bite since yesterday. I'm ashamed to be so late about my washing, but I've been cooking things all day, trying to tempt her—"

"Oh dear! Oh dear! Oh *dear!*" moaned the figure on the piazza.

STORIES THAT END WELL

Mrs. Conner put her arms akimbo. She looked steadfastly at the swaying and moaning shape. Mrs. Conner was a woman who had been known to fry fresh griddle-cakes for tramps. She drew in her breath and exhaled it explosively, as one that has been shocked out of speech.

"I've made her postum cereal coffee and cooked her granum, and I went out and begged dewberries from the Bigelows—she used to be fond of them—and I don't know how many times I've made toast. She says I just torment her."

"Won't she drink a little beef tea?"

"Oh-h! Oh-h! U-r-r-r! *Ug-h-h-h!*" shuddered the invalid.

"Didn't you know she thinks meat wicked? And milk's robbing the cow, and eggs robbing the hen, who wants to have a family as much as we do," said Emily, rather incorrectly.

"More'n some of us do, I guess," retorted Mrs. Conner, "and more'n folks *ought* to if they ain't prepared to do their duty by them when they've got 'em." She launched a fiery glance at Mrs. Darter, who was now groaning vehemently. "Got it all turned on this afternoon, ain't she?"

A MIRACLE PLAY

"Dr. Abbie Cruller told her that it wasn't natural to suppress ourselves. If you feel like groaning you ought to groan—"

"And she eats sech queer stuff she's hungry most of the time," Mrs. Conner interrupted, "so I expect she groans a lot. Say, Emmy, have you ever had anybody come in and give your ma a good hard—*blowing up?*"

The blood rushed to Emmy's face; her eyes sank. She answered, in a confused tone: "Aunt Lida Glenn was over yesterday. I don't know what she said to mother, but mother—mother told me the one thing she wanted on earth was to have me—send Albert away and have everything ended between us, for she never was so insulted in her life as she had been by Albert's mother."

"Albert's mother ain't Albert; though I don't blame her, Emmy, and Mrs. Glenn is a awful nice woman. But it ain't fair to hold Albert for her opinions, right or wrong. As I said, she ain't Albert, nor Albert ain't her."

"So I told mother," said Emmy. "I did hate to be disrespectful to her, but I told her so; and she answered that Mrs. Glenn said Albert thought so

STORIES THAT END WELL

too. Then when I tried to question her she was in so much pain and groaned so I hadn't the heart to bother her. She let me put hot cloths on her, and give her a Turkish bath over the alcohol-lamp; and I hoped she'd let me make her some water gruel, but she wouldn't touch a spoonful. Mrs. Conner, you don't suppose she—she will keep it up much longer?" Emmy's eyes dilated with an unspoken fear as she lifted them to the kind woman before her. "She said she felt herself growing weaker this morning. I—I told her I wouldn't go to the picnic with Bert, if she would only eat something. But she said that she couldn't eat anything. One time—one time she went three days. I didn't let the neighbors know; but I was 'most crazy, and poor little Jinny cried. She isn't one to cry, either."

"No," Mrs. Conner agreed, glancing at Jinny who was chattering volubly with the girl in the phaeton—"no, I'd say she'd be more likely to be sassy."

"I'm afraid she was that, too," suggested Emmy, with a dim smile, "but at last she got scared. It was some new books Bert brought, got mother out of that time; she was so anxious to read them."

"Yes, I know your ma's a great reader. Always

A MIRACLE PLAY

was. She told me she fairly revelled in stories of high life and detective stories. She said she'd read every one of The Duchess's books—I guess 'twas a hundred. And she said many and many a night she'd set up in bed reading half the night. 'It's so resting,' she says, 'to read 'bout murders and how they are tracked down.' It took up her mind from her sorriers, she says. And she told me she didn't know how she'd ever lived through losing your pa but for *Sherlock Holmes*. If I was you I'd jest try to stir her up with these books. I'll fetch 'em to her. I read the one of Ouida's and it's real good—and, come to think of it, brimful of eating. Who knows but it'll git her to wanting to eat herself. Why, when I think what kind of cook she was, it don't seem possible! But now don't you worry, Emmy; she'll come all right and she'll come all right 'bout Mrs. Glenn, good friends as they've always been. Why, she always has liked Lida Glenn better than all her other friends together! She'll *have* to make up. Don't you fret a bit." She said the words in a hearty voice, and she strode vigorously across the grass to the piazza and presented her package with a breezy cheer. "Here's two new books by Ouida,

STORIES THAT END WELL

and one by Bertha M. Clay, and two by Maria Correlly, Mrs. Darter; and Emmy'll be ready to read them to you soon."

Mrs. Darter had a delicate pale face, much like Emmy's in features, but etched with tiny wrinkles. The corners of her mouth dropped, and there was a habitual frown of pain on her pretty forehead. She did not look ungentle, only obstinate.

"Thank you," she murmured. Then she sighed.

Mrs. Conner opened her mouth, and shut it again, compressing the lips with unnecessary firmness.

Mrs. Darter laid her head back on her chair. She closed her eyes. A plaintive, sibilant noise hissed through her parted lips.

"Well, I'm real sorry you're sick," said Mrs. Connor, her voice again full of good-nature. "I guess what you need is a little nourishing food—"

Mrs. Darter screamed, and Mrs. Conner stood aghast. She was more aghast to behold all the apparent symptoms of a swoon in the invalid, and would have run for water—an act, however, prevented by the timely opening of Mrs. Darter's eyes. "Don't say the word!" she begged, shuddering. "I have to starve off a pleurisy. It would *kill* me! And

A MIRACLE PLAY

the books are no good; I'm too sick to hear reading.
Oh dear! Oh dear! Oh dear!"

Mrs. Conner backed off the piazza—she said she guessed she must go—and left Mrs. Darter moaning and rocking.

"And to tell you the truth, Miss Keith"—thus she ended a breathless narration to her new boarder—"I went quick, for I knew I couldn't hold in one minnit longer! And how'd it help poor Emmy to have her mother quarrel with Lida Glenn and me the same day? There's Susy Baker making eyes at Albert Glenn, this minnit; and if she ain't carrying Mrs. Glenn some of her ma's blueberry cake! Right by the Darters, too; and Emmy seeing her!"

"What is the matter with Mrs. Darter?"

"Well, old Dr. Potter says she's 'neurotic,' if you know what *that* is. I call it jest notions. What the doctors in my time called a hypo, that's what she is! She's always been the greatest hand to dose. Mr. Conner will have it she kep' old Captain Darter poor buying patent medicines. And she run after every new cure-all going. It was electricity one year, and 'nother year it was blue glass, and one time I remember she had a woman come of the sort that used

STORIES THAT END WELL

to call themselves bone-doctors when I was a girl and this country wasn't much settled, but now they're osteologists, or some sech funny name, and give out they can rub everything on earth out of you. Mrs. Darter had *her* for a long spell, till she got pneumonia, and nigh died, and sickened of the osteologist; and I give her mustard plasters, good strong ones, myself. All this time Emmy was engaged to Albert Glenn; but the old captain was real feeble, and Emmy wouldn't leave him to git married. I will say Mrs. Darter was real devoted to him, though Emmy done all the night work and spared her all she could, give up her school, and spent every cent of the money she'd laid by school-teaching and working art embroidery for her clothes, when she'd be married—spent every cent on her pa. Got him a wheel chair, and if ever a man set the world by his daughter the captain done it. He liked Albert, too. I guess if captain had lived, sick's he was, he'd have found a way so's Emmy and Albert could git married. But he died. Then you'd 'a' s'posed they could marry, for his life was *well* insured, and they got enough for the widder to be comfortable and keep a girl. But the minnit he died poor Mrs. Darter got

A MIRACLE PLAY

nervous prostration, and she was a nervous prostrate for a year, and they had to spend money traveling, and of course Emmy couldn't git married. Mrs. Darter went to Hot Springs, Arkansas, and she went to a sanitarium, and last she come home saying she was cured. But on the cars she made the acquaintance of a woman—well, I don't want to jedge—jedge not, and you won't git jedged, you know—and I know 'tis hard for a woman to make a living, but I guess that woman was a crank, and a designing one at that. But she went to Mrs. Darter's to board, and she never paid no board, but she preached to Mrs. Darter 'bout how all the diseases that we have come from eating wrong things; and she said we'd got to live 'cording to nature more; and eating meat made folks fierce like the carnivorous beasts, and things seasoned with salt was bad for you, and jest plain farnishous foods without salt—like we was *chickens!*—was best for us. I don't see how Mrs. Darter, who used to cook real well and liked to have the sewing society to tea, could stand sech sick stuff, but she did; and what's wuss, even after the fool critter ran away and married a magnetic healer who, they do say, has another wife, even to this day Abiel

STORIES THAT END WELL

Darter believes in her and goes by what she says. And she ain't et any fit food for so long that if she ever does git coaxed to take a wholesome bite of beef or pie her stummick is so weak of course she cayn't stand it. Strong folks can eat strong vituals, and weak folks cayn't. Mrs. Glenn coaxed her in to a boiled dinner one day, and poor Mrs. Darter nearly died of it. Now you cayn't git her to budge from her grass and potato diet, as Conner calls it. And as for poor Emmy, when she can git married Lord only knows!"

Miss Keith had not interrupted the story by as much as a hum of assent. She looked up with a queer smile. "Has Mrs. Darter ever tried Christian Science?"

"No, she ain't," snorted Mrs. Conner; "we've been spared *that*. The Bigelow girls—they're two single ladies, real nice girls, too, who live in that big brown house with a cupola and a hip-roof there, 'bout two doors up—they tried to get her into that way of thinking; they're at everybody. And they used to go over and set with her and give her 'silent treatment,' they called it, and try to think the dyspepsia out of her; but one of 'em got a fish-bone in

A MIRACLE PLAY

her throat and they had to come to me to pull it out with a pair of tweezers. That sorter dampened 'em for a while and Mrs. Darter says, 'Why didn't you *think* it out?' And then Ann—she's the oldest—says they wasn't far enough advanced yet, Mrs. Darter told 'em then they wasn't far enough advanced to doctor *her*. And I guess they ain't been there sense."

"All the same," insisted Miss Keith, smiling, "I think Mrs. Darter needs mental healing or Christian Science, I don't care which."

Emmy put her mother to bed. She gave her the soothing drops which the vanished but still reverenced healer had left—drops which she was almost certain owed their potency to some alias of opium. In the morning Mrs. Darter came out of her drugged sleep with a deadly nausea that swathed her muscles and laid her rigid in its limp, devil-fish clutch. The roof of her mouth was like leather; her head seemed to be pounded with hammers; she was burning with fever, and malign twitchings and itchings tormented her to rub her nose incessantly, when the least motion was fearsome to her. She had much

STORIES THAT END WELL

more cause than ordinary to moan, and moan she did at every breath. Jinny had rushed away to a small chum the moment the dishes for her own breakfast had been washed; but Emmy couldn't run. She drank a cup of coffee; she had no heart to eat. Jinny, however had eaten the dainty little meal that Emmy had prepared—a forlorn hope to tempt the invalid.

"Oh, my nose! my *nose!*" wailed Mrs. Darter. "Emmy, you've got to leave off staring out of that window at the Glenns', and come and scratch my nose! Ah-uh! Ah-u-h!"

Emmy silently sat down by the bedside. If Albert passed the yard on his wheel, as he did every morning at half-past seven, he would not find her. Emmy had used no one knows how many devices to always be in the yard when Albert passed, or, at least, in sight by a window. Bert used to say that glimpse of Emmy "was a bracer for the whole day." Thursday night was his night to visit her, but last night he hadn't come.

"Emmy, you ain't any account at all as a scratcher!" fretted her mother. "You scratch where it ain't itching, and you don't scratch where it itches,

A MIRACLE PLAY

and you're so mincing! Rub it *hard!* Oh-h! *why* must I suffer so? It's hard enough to have a ungrateful child without having your nose itch!"

Emmy adventured a sentence long lurking in her mind, but which she never had the courage to push out into the air: "Mother, I think, I'm sure it is the soothing drops which make your nose itch so. There's opium—"

"There isn't a grain of opium in them," sobbed Mrs. Darter. "You know I always hated opium or morphine or anything of the sort; and doctor told me she wouldn't give the wicked drug. That's what Lida Glenn much as told me; much as told me, too, that I was putting on and wasn't real sick; and I told her—oh-h-h!—I told her—if she considered—*me*—that sort of woman she must feel awful bad to—oh-h-h!—to have her only child marry my daughter; and—I—thought— Oh-h! wuh-h-h! how awful sick I am!"

"You told Mrs. Glenn?" prompted Emmy, a flame in either cheek.

"I told her that—sss! sss!—I thought the sooner that engagement was broke the better it would be for—u-r-r-r!—all concerned—e-hee! ee-e! ee-e-e-e!"

STORIES THAT END WELL

Oh my head! my head! Oh, I got to scratch my nose again. You ain't rubbing the right place!"

"And what did Mrs. Glenn say?" asked Emmy. A ripple ran over her face, and she swallowed before she spoke.

"She said you wouldn't give Albert up, real spiteful. Ah-rr-r! Oh, I *am* so sick! I said you would ruther than have your mother so insulted—and if you don't I guess I'll give up trying to live. She was so topping. Much as telling me it would be better for my own child if I died. Oh dear! oh dear! oh dear! And Albert looked as cross last night—"

"Did Albert come last night?"

"Yes, he did. You needn't jump out of the chair! I told him you wasn't home, and you had gone out to the Collins spring. He said when would you be home, and I said I didn't know. And he went off mad. Oh-h! oh-h-h! Jinny says Carrie March says she saw him down-town riding on his bicycle with Susan Baker. O-h-h-h-h! How can I talk when I'm so sick? Girls don't know about young men. Bert wouldn't like you to see him sometimes, be sure of that!" She paused to moan, and Emmy looked at her in a misery of doubt. Was she telling the truth?

A MIRACLE PLAY

It had come to that, since Mrs. Darter had grown to take her soothing drops in every ailment—there was no surety that she either saw things straight or told them straight.

"I guess I'll go make you some coffee, mother," said Emmy; "you need it."

The girl's self-control was like tinder to the woman's fire. Mrs. Darter flared out: "You needn't make any coffee. I won't drink it. What's more, I won't eat one bite until you promise me to break with Bert Glenn—not if I starve to death! If you're willing to let those Glenns insult me and triumph over me, I ain't willing to live to see it." Her feeble accents shrilled to a scream, as she flung out her arms with a reminiscence of the behavior of her favorite heroines in novels. "Go, Emmeline Darter, marry him if you dare; but you will pass to the altar over your only mother's grave!" She had a confused sense that her syntax had played her false and that she had not gotten the words precisely right; but she covered any embarrassment by sinking back and moaning.

Emmy looked at her with a mounting terror in her heart. She told herself that it was impossible that

STORIES THAT END WELL

her mother could carry out such a hideous threat; but she knew that mucilaginous obstinacy which had not a place firm enough for a reason to get a hold. "And she won't want to eat, either," mused Emmy, wretchedly, "for that nasty medicine has made her awful sick. She's got a fever now; that will burn away her strength. And if it comes to a choice between letting my mother starve and giving up Bert, I shall have to give him up!"

Emmy sprang out of her chair. The thought was like a lash on a raw wound.

She ran to the window; it seemed to her that she couldn't breathe; and her mother's whimpering irritated her past patience. She knew if she spoke that she would let the bars down for her anger, and if she were angry her mother would be upset physically, and grow so much worse that she would feel like a murderer. She felt the goading of that furious petulance which torments a woman often into sacrificing herself out of very anger. It was on her tongue to say, "I'd rather die myself than give up Bert, and you know it; and I'll never forgive you as long as I live, but rather than see you die before my eyes I *will* give him up."

A MIRACLE PLAY

Neither to Emmy nor to her mother was there a doubt that any word passed would be kept. Mrs. Darter, in the lost days of peace, before her vagaries had corroded her affection, had said once, "Emmy never told me a lie in her life, nor she never broke a promise she made me!"

Emmy shut her lips tight and looked out of the window. Her troubled gaze did not note the dewy freshness of the morning on turf and tree. The houses were brown cottages for the most part, built in the lean period of western rural architecture when a stunted cruciform effect and a bescrolled piazza was the model for every village. But the ugly lines of wood were veiled by a kindly wealth of wistarias and clematis royally flaunting, by Virginia-creeper and trumpet-vines splashed with vermillion and yellow; the grass was velvet, there was a gay company of geraniums prospering in every garden; and below the hills and the tree-tops lay the lovely, dimpled hill-sides, golden with wheat or shorn to a varnished silver like nothing so much as the hue of shining flax, and the waving fields of corn—all under a vault of burning blue, delicate, tender, innocent, with no sumptuous and threatening richness of cloud be-

STORIES THAT END WELL

tokening storm, only high in the heavens the milky white cumuli, the “harvest clouds.”

There were a thousand witcheries of light and shade, there was a radiant lavishness of color; it was a landscape like a multitude all over the Middle West, nevertheless a sight to make the heart beat the quicker for sheer delight. But it might have been a stone wall for anything poor Emmy, who loved each growing thing, saw in it this moment. To live without Bert, perhaps to learn that Susy Baker had the love which she would seem to have flung away—Emmy would have groaned if she had not heard Mrs. Darter’s piteous din, and thought grimly that her mother did enough groaning for their small family!

Yet at this very instant of despair a minister of grace was lifting the latch of the Darter gate, and Emmy was unconsciously eying her. The minister of grace was short of stature and very plump. She had a round, fair, freckled face, which looked the rounder for its glittering spectacles. Her hair was a yellowish gray, but she covered it with a small white sailor hat. She wore a neat brown and white calico frock. To escape the dew she held her skirts high;

A MIRACLE PLAY

one could see that her preference was for black alpaca slippers and white cotton stockings. The minister's name was Miss Ann Bigelow.

"Now *she* comes to stir mother up worse!" thought Emmy. So blind are we to the future. But she opened the door for Miss Ann Bigelow, and bade her welcome, and proffered her the best rocking-chair in the parlor and a palm-leaf fan.

Miss Bigelow's countenance was beaming like an electric light.

"I really *had* to come!" she exclaimed so soon as she could take breath. "Have you heard about Mrs. Conner spraining her ankle?"

"Emmy, open the door!" moaned Mrs. Darter from within—her bed-room adjoined the parlor. Emmy opened the door, while she said: "I'm so sorry. When? How is she?"

"Oh, she's all right now!" said Miss Bigelow. "It's wonderful—a real miracle, I told sister. That's what I came to tell you. She sent over for us, and there she lay, flat on the kitchen floor. I begun to treat her in my mind the minute I saw her, for I saw she was in error. All her word was: 'Send for a doctor; it's sprained, if it ain't broke!' I didn't know

STORIES THAT END WELL

what *to* do. I didn't want to encourage her in error, and yet you know we are *not* advanced so far as sprains and broken bones, and it is usual to summon a doctor; and I don't feel I'm advanced enough myself to undertake serious cases; I'm too weak and timid, and I haven't the spiritual vision. Emmy, does your mother *always* groan that loud way? Is she in pain? I mean, does she *think* she is in pain?"

"Yes'm," said Emmy; "but please go on; mother is listening."

"Well, I stood there dazed, you may say; and just then in came Miss Keith. She's a little slim thing, but *such* eyes! They seem to look you through and through! I'd have known she was a healer even if Mrs. Conner hadn't told me the night before when she was over in our house. She stood there, just simply looking at Mrs. Conner, not saying a word for a minnit. Then she says in the *kindest* voice—I can't tell you how soft and kind her voice was!—she says, 'Have you the impression of great pain, Mrs. Conner?' And Mrs. Conner—you know how—well abruptly—she speaks, she said: '*Impression* of pain? I only wish you had something jabbing

A MIRACLE PLAY

you like a hot iron, I guess you'd be *impressed*. Ain't anybody going to take off my stocking? It's swelling every minnit!" Miss Keith only looked at her, and lifted her hand for me and the girl to keep still. I expect she was giving her silent treatment, for in a moment or two she said: "Well?" in such an inspiring, cheerful tone; and Mrs. Conner said, "Why, it's better!" surprised as could be; and I had to clap my hands for joy. But Miss Keith told us both to go out for a while and so we did. We waited half an hour by the clock, and that girl was the most restless being you ever saw. I had all I could to keep her quiet. Then the door opened—" Miss Bigelow made a wave of her plump hands, indicating the opening of a door, and paused with hands and voice. Mrs. Darter had ceased to groan.

"What happened?" said Emmy.

Miss Bigelow's hands met in a clap. "*Mrs. Conner came walking out with Miss Keith, that's what happened!*" said she, in a low, solemn voice.

"On her sprained ankle?" cried Mrs. Darter.

"On her sprained ankle, her that couldn't move it without nearly fainting for the pain. She said it hardly pained her at all; and she's going right on

STORIES THAT END WELL

with her preserving this minute. I said to sister it was simply mirac'lus. I can't find a better word."

"Maybe her ankle was not sprained so badly as she thought," Emmy suggested.

"Her face was white as a sheet," said Miss Bigelow; "and we all know Mrs. Conner isn't one to cry before she's hurt, or make a fuss; and we all know her prejudices about mental healing. She says she don't believe a *bit* more in it than she did, 'but,' says she, 'that girl's a wonder! I wish,' says she, 'Mrs. Darter could have her.' I never lisped, but I made up my mind to go and tell you right straight."

"She couldn't do mother any good," said Emmy, wearily. At which Mrs. Darter spoke for herself in a good, round voice of contradiction. "*Why* couldn't she? How much does she charge, Miss Ann?"

"*Not one cent!*" replied Ann, with a thrill of triumph; "*if* she'll come, she'll come free; but I don't know whether she will come."

"Emmy, you go and ask Mrs. Conner to ask her to come; ask Mrs. Conner to come too," said Mrs. Darter, resuming her feeble voice. "I want to see if that ankle *is* cured. You'll stay with me, Miss Ann?"

A MIRACLE PLAY

So, almost too quickly for her to realize the position, Emmy found herself on her way to the Conners'. A fragrant odor wafted Mrs. Conner's occupation through the open kitchen door before Emmy crossed the threshold to behold her skimming a great kettle of plum jam. "Landy, land! it's Emmy Darter already!" she cried, with a jolly laugh. "I thought I could git that plum jam ready to take off before you'd come. I knew it wouldn't be long when I saw Miss Ann Bigelow trotting across lots. Your ma's sent for Miss Keith, I guess. Well, it's lucky Conner has the hosses hitched in the wagon, and he can take us right over. I'll call Hedwig to take off the jam, and Miss Keith—"

"But, Mrs. Conner, please tell me about yourself," urged Emmy. "*Did* she cure you?"

Mrs. Conner's left eyelid twitched in company with the left corner of her shapely mouth. "You ask me no questions, Emmy, and I'll tell you no lies; but you can make up your mind Miss Keith can cure your ma—if she's *let!*" These orphic sentences were dropped with a slow and ponderous nod of the head, and ceased at the entrance of Miss Keith. The young lady looked very pretty in a crisp pink and white

STORIES THAT END WELL

dimity frock and a large white hat with pink roses. She had none of the airs of an adept or a seer. There was nothing occult or intruding on the imagination in her presence. She sat on the front seat beside Mr. Conner and talked about cantaloupe melons. Mrs. Conner was amazingly silent; it was plain, however, from no unkindly motives, since often she cast an affectionate glance on Emmy, and, as the wagon stopped in front of the Darter gate, she patted the girl's shoulder, saying: "It's all going to come right, *I guess*. Jest you mind us and keep still."

Emmy's bewilderment deepened, but she said, "Yes'm," in her docile way, and followed Mrs. Conner and Miss Keith down the walk, leaving Mr. Conner to chuckle over some unknown mirth of his own, in the wagon.

Mrs. Darter, so Miss Bigelow told them, had been dozing all the while Emmy was gone. Her greeting to Miss Keith was a feeble moan. But on Miss Keith's part there was an amazing transformation. She bent her brows above eyes which shone out of them in a level, intent gaze. Emmy recalled Miss Ann's description, and understood it with a thrill. For a few seconds Miss Keith stood motionless,

A MIRACLE PLAY

shedding that steady, unblinking gaze at the drawn face on the pillow. Mrs. Darter appeared to feel it through her eyelids; she winced, she ceased whimpering. Miss Keith smiled gently. She spoke, and her voice was like silk. "You have suffered very much!"

Mrs. Darter opened her eyes; she gazed up at the eyes above her; her chin quivered and two tears slowly ran down her cheeks—the first tears seen on her cheeks during all her lamentations. "Oh, I have," she murmured, "and nobody believes it—not my oldest friend, not my own children!"

"I believe it," said the girl; "yet it is all a mistake." Without turning her eyes, she made a little motion with her hands toward the door, and instantly Miss Ann marshaled the others out of the room. Mrs. Conner shut the door.

In spite of herself, Emmy began to feel her nerves twitch with the excitement and mystery. "Oh, Mrs. Conner," she entreated that stanch friend, "is it possible she *can* cure mother?"

"Jest you keep quiet," said Mrs. Conner, "and set still. I'm going out to the kitchen to heat this beef tea." For the first time, Emmy observed that

STORIES THAT END WELL

Mrs. Conner carried a glass jar insufficiently wrapped in newspaper. Directly she was heard clattering among the saucepans. Miss Ann stiffened into a rigid attitude, and her face assumed a rapt expression. Emmy locked her fingers and sat still. At this moment she was startled by a soft noise outside, and a young fellow pushed a handsome, flushed face into the triangle between the window curtains and beckoned with a look of entreaty. Emmy's heart jumped into her throat. It was Albert. She didn't care whether he rode with Susan Baker or not; it was Albert who loved her; she knew it. If she could only go out to him! But Miss Ann shook her head and laid a mystic finger on her lips. Emmy, too, laid a finger on her lips; but her finger trembled and her eyes swam in tears. Albert stood passive and bewildered. The moments dragged on. Really there were not so many of them; a scant half an hour covered the flight of time; but to Emmy, uncertain whether her greatly tried lover might not have to go back to an expected train at any one of them, and to Albert, who did have a train on his mind and had ridden swiftly up to his sweetheart's for the briefest of interviews, those minutes seemed an hour. Yet

A MIRACLE PLAY

Albert knew better, having his watch in hand and waving it and pointing at it, the better to explain his hurry. Once Emmy mustered courage in an access of desperation to rise to her feet, but the look of horror on Miss Ann's features dropped her like a club.

Albert's mind darted blindly from one conjecture of disaster to another. At one minute he was ready to march in rashly before Miss Ann and demand what was the matter; at another he was cold at the thought of blundering in on a death-bed.

He gasped with relief when the door opened and Miss Keith came out, smiling and calling: "Mrs. Conner! Mrs. Conner! hurry up that beef tea, and make some strong coffee as soon as you can!"

Then he did venture to come into the room, essaying a general bow and smile.

"I hope Aunty Darter is better!" he stammered. The children of the old friends had always given them a brevet relationship. Mrs. Darter was "Aunty Darter" to Albert, and Mrs. Glenn "Aunty Lida" to the Darter girls.

"Mrs. Darter will be well to-morrow," said Miss Keith, quietly; "she is going to take some coffee—"

STORIES THAT END WELL

"And some toast and plum jam," interrupted Mrs. Darter herself. "I know Mrs. Conner has been making jam. The times I've hankered after jam these last months! I'm going to eat everything I didn't dast to—"

"By degrees," said Miss Keith, "as the mental power grows stronger."

"Is that Albert?" said Mrs. Darter. "Albert, lift me up while I drink that beef tea."

Albert and Emmy held her while Mrs. Conner fed her a cup of the tea. They laughed hysterically, with tears in their eyes, as Mrs. Darter sighed weakly. "Oh, but that's good!" while Mrs. Conner radiated satisfaction and Miss Ann rocked to and fro, announcing that it was "mirac'lus!" They did not comprehend what had happened; they could not look into the future and a time when Mrs. Darter should throw herself with energy into preparing for Emmy's marriage; they only dimly foresaw her recovery and reconciliation with the common pleasures of life; but it was enough for Emmy that her mother's black hour had passed, and for Albert that he was close to Emmy, and that there was a vague omen of happiness in the atmosphere.

A MIRACLE PLAY

Mrs. Darter took her tea. She went to sleep, as Miss Keith directed her; and she partook with relish of coffee, toast, and jam that selfsame day, so rapidly had her state improved by evening. It was after this last meal, she being vastly strengthened by the food and drink, that she received Albert's messages from his mother—rather, that she cut them short.

"No, Albert, your ma shan't keep on feeling bad. She was right. It was all in my mind. All disease is in the mind, I guess. But I wasn't putting it on—"

"Oh, she *knows*; she didn't mean—"

"We didn't, either of us, mean all we said; the truth is, I felt so bad and so hungry I couldn't see straight, anyway; and as to Dr. Abbie Cruller, I guess your mother wasn't far out. She said I never had had a well day since I knew that woman, and I do believe that's so; but I've got a wonderful new doctor now; don't charge a cent; and you tell your mother to come over and see me and stay to tea. My hand's out making blueberry cake, but I'm going to try."

But this interview was hours after Doris Keith and the Conners had driven away. Mrs. Conner

STORIES THAT END WELL

gave her husband a graphic account of the "miracle." "Ann Bigelow will have it's no less," says she.

"Thing pleased me," chuckles Conner, wrinkling his eyes out of sight in his ironic enjoyment—"thing pleased me was the way she'd go on 'bout Miss Keith's eyes piercing her right through, after Miss Keith had practysed them eyes on you 'n' me all the evening, jest from my description of that Indian doctor. Well, she done it well; but I wish I could have seen it!"

"Will Mrs. Darter keep right on and not back-slide, think?" said Mrs. Conner.

"I think she will," said Doris; "I hope she will. And there's one thing: after I'm gone (I shall have to run away from my reputation) you must own up about your ankle—and *me* to Miss Darter and poor, trusting Miss Bigelow. She's such a good soul! Mrs. Darter—well, you will know when it's safe to tell Mrs. Darter."

"Humph!" said Conner, "Emmy'll be grateful! I guess we'll go slow on the Widow Darter; and as to Ann Bigelow—"

"I do feel sneaky about her," sighed Doris. "It's

A MIRACLE PLAY

touching, her faith. She's a simple-hearted creature. I hate to uproot her."

"Oh, you needn't be afraid," said Conner, grinning; "she won't be uprooted. She will say it's jest as much mental healing as if you done it in earnest. And ain't Mrs. Darter healed? she'll say."

"Well," Doris mused aloud, "I dare say she's right. It certainly was a mental healing, and how far the power of the mind to heal goes none of us can say. Perhaps, after all, she is right, and it *is* a bit of a miracle, although it was only a miracle play!"

THE END.

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